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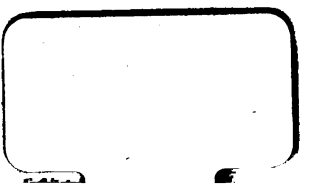

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MEMOIRS

OF A

MAGDALEN.

[P. 62. B.]

Hamitt Staples
Hugh Kelly

MEMOIRS

OF A

MAGDALEN:

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

LOUISA MILDMAY.

Now first published from a

SERIES OF ORIGINAL LETTERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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1904

THE

HISTORY

OF

LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER XIII.

Miſs HARRIOT BEAUCLERK *to Miſs* LOUISA MILDMAY.

O! my ſweet friend, my deareſt Louiſa, are our ſorrows never to have an end; and is every day that ſhould mitigate the ſeverity of our fortune, to bring us nothing but an aggravation of diſtreſs! Your poor brother —I cannot keep it from you—was a few hours ago brought to us deſperately

wounded by that barbarous villain Harold, with whom he accidentally met at the Crown in Reading; and there, with more courage than diſcretion called to an account for his infamous behaviour to the moſt beautiful and moſt worthy of her ſex. Piſtols were the curſed weapons they fought with, and your brother received a ſhot a little above the groin; the ball was extracted by an eminent ſurgeon at Reading, and the colonel was brought home in a litter, as the phyſicians judged it better to remove him even ſuch a number of miles, than to let him remain in any place where he could not have proper accommodations.

Your poor mother, when ſhe ſaw him borne in, fainted away, and was immediately removed to her own apartment; where, after applying the neceſſary reſtoratives, we happily recovered her; ſhe

ſhe then told me that this was nothing more than what ſhe expected, and that ſhe was the leſs affected at the ſhock as ſhe had rendered it continually familiar to her imagination — "Yet, Miſs Beauclerk," continued the venerable lady, "it is a "ſevere ſtroke, though an expected one; "but God's will be done." A large tear then rolled down her fine face, which ſhe endeavoured to reſtrain, as ſhe ſaw how much I was touched with the general misfortune; after this, ſhe ſent for the ſurgeon, and doctor, who attended the colonel, from Reading, and begged they would give her their candid opinion of his ſituation.—"Don't be "afraid to tell me gentlemen," ſays ſhe, endeavouring at a ſmile; "for, though "I have all the tenderneſs of a mother, "I hope I alſo poſſeſs the reſignation "of a Chriſtian." The gentlemen looked at one another in admiration both of her piety and her fortitude, and

very freely owned that the colonel was in ſome danger; but that they were nevertheleſs in hopes, if they could prevent a fever, to ſee him tolerably recovered in a little time. The gentlemen then preparing to withdraw, I whiſpered the doctor to feel her own pulſe, which he did in a very reſpectful manner, and adviſed her to looſe a few ounces of blood: ſhe aſſented to the motion; and the doctor at going out gave me a look of benignity for my recollection, that indicated a goodneſs of heart in himſelf, which has raiſed him not a little in my eſtimation. After your mother had been bled, we prevailed upon her to lye down, and I left her juſt now in a ſweet doze, which I flatter myſelf will do her a world of benefit.

As my attention at your brother's firſt coming in was called off by your mother's diſtreſs, I ſent for Butler, his Iriſh ſervant,

ſervant, who is principally employed about his perſon, to be informed of particulars—The poor fellow, though deeply affected for his maſter's accident, told me he ſhould ever love and honour his old maſter, for bearing up ſo like a man againſt the ſtroke of misfortune—"Madam," ſays he, "inſtead of exclaiming, as the generality of father's would have done on ſuch an occaſion, and cenſuring the raſhneſs of his ſon, he took hold of my maſter's hand, kiſſed it with an air of inconceiveable ſatisfaction, and praiſed him for the attention which he had ſhewn to the honour of his family: the only regret he teſtified, was at hearing that the perſon who had injured his honour was not hurt in the engagement; for, had he fallen, ſays my old maſter, that would have been a great ſatisfaction—And ſo it would you know madam," continued the honeſt Hi-

bernian, — "The honour of a good "family is a very nice affair; I am "come of as good a family myſelf as "any in Ireland, and know how to feel "for ſuch a misfortune as has happened "to my maſter's."

Though I could not help ſmiling at the egotiſm of poor Butler, I nevertheleſs deſired him to anſwer my queſtions, and not teaze me with his reflections: he therefore proceeded to inform me that your father and brother were both more than ever incenſed againſt Harold, and that your brother had ſolemnly ſwore to call him to a ſecond account the moment he recovered from the preſent accident; that your father, however, had been forced out of the room from the colonel, as talking did much injury to the latter; and that the old gentleman, upon withdrawing, ſaid ſomething about altering his will; Butler added, that your

your brother desired a visit from me above all things, and he believed would request a favour of that kind if he was any way better in the morning.

You conjure me by all our friendship, my dearest Louisa, to give you a minute account of every thing; to mitigate no description, and to conceal no distress; I obey you, though against my inclination, as I know how a sensibility like your's must be wounded by a repetition of some circumstances; but my sweet, my ever amiable friend, exert your utmost resolution, and prepare to meet those evils with fortitude, which are impossible to be avoided—True magnanimity is never seen till the day of distress, and those have naturally the noblest minds who make the firmest stand against affliction.

From ſome things which have eſcaped your brother ſince I wrote the foregoing part of this letter, I have reaſon to imagine that Sir Robert Harold was not altogether ſo much in fault, in the late rencounter, as we were inclined to imagine: colonel Mildmay himſelf acknowledges, that he uſed every provocation before he could prevail upon the baronet to engage; and he even intimates, that Sir Robert was actually going to town with an intention of throwing himſelf at your feet, and imploring your forgiveneſs—If this was the caſe, it was certainly raſh in the colonel to carry matters to ſuch an extremity; he ought to conſider that the happineſs of more people than one is dependent upon his welfare, and that the hazarding of his life may increaſe the general misfortune, but can never have the ſmalleſt tendency to remove it: but he has too nice a ſenſibility for his own eaſe, and is frequently running into

into real ills to avoid imaginary misfortunes. You know, my dear, my partiality for your brother; and you also know that, on the present occasion, prudence will not allow me to give such a loose to my feelings as I should naturally shew, were we on such a footing as you have frequently wished us—Perhaps, it may be something of this very partiality which induces me to wish, that, in the course of the recent transaction, he had made use of a little less spirit, and a little more understanding. You cannot conceive, my dearest Louisa, how it distresses me to think of his situation, to find myself in the same house with him, and yet to be under a necessity of seeming only a friendly partaker in the common calamity—This cruel constraint is too much, and I pine, I sicken, I die, for an interview with him, though I am sensible such a circumstance in his present condition must fill me with the most

received this little inſtance of our attachment—She wept over me when I mentioned my deſign to remain at Mildmay Hall till my attendance became unneceſſary; and, ardently preſſing me to her boſom, condeſcended to kiſs my cheek, and called me her true Harriot, her other Louiſa—Ever ſince ſhe has honoured me with a more than common ſhare of her confidence; is deſirous of being alone with me upon every occaſion; and you may eaſily conjecture, my ever amiable girl, what ſubject principally engroſſes our converſation.

Juſt this moment ſhe ſent for me to her bedſide: having been ſome minutes awake, and ſeeing my fingers marked with ink—"I ſuppoſe, my love," ſays ſhe, "you have been writing to poor "Louiſa." I replied in the affirmative, and inſinuated what a conſolation it would be to you, if you were honoured with

with her remembrance. "My dear "Miſs Beauclerk," returned ſhe, "have "not I already told you, that ſhe is ſtill "my child; that ſhe even may write to "me if ſhe pleaſes, and that I ſhall "always conſider her unhappy fall with "a much greater ſhare of pity than re-"ſentment? To be candid with you, "my obliging love," continued the dear lady, "I am more to be blamed "for leaving Sir Robert Harold and "Louiſa ſo frequently together, than "either is for abuſing the confidence "which I repoſed in their diſcretion. "Young people, where they tenderly "love each other, and where a day is "ſet apart for their marriage, are very "dangerous companions; the woman "loſes all her fear, and the man all his "veneration; they become inſenſibly "more and more familiar, till their "imaginations are intenſely heated, and "their recollection totally loſt—In ſuch

"a ſituation,

" a ſituation, the conſequence is but too
" obvious; the woman wakes into di-
" ſtraction, and the man into doubt or
" diſguſt — She trembles for his con-
" ſtancy, and he fears for her virtue;
" recriminations naturally enſue, and
" they either go to the altar with ſenti-
" ments very little calculated to preſerve
" their future felicity, or break off
" in ſuch a manner as draws a general
" diſgrace upon the woman and her fa-
" mily. O! Miſs Beauclerk, why did'nt
" I conſider this matter with propri-
" ety, when ſuch a conſideration would
" have been eſſential to my happineſs!
" Why would I expoſe the darling
" of my heart to dangers which it was
" ſcarcely poſſible for her to avoid; or
" enſnare the inexperience of my child
" with uneceſſary temptations — But,
" alas, *becauſe* ſhe was *my* child, I muſt
" fooliſhly ſuppoſe her above the reach
" of human infirmities, and be guilty

" of

"of an inattention in my own conduct,
"which I would have ſeverely cenſured
"in the mother of any body elſe. O!
"my ſweet Louiſa, your doating mo-
"ther's extravagant fondneſs has been
"the cauſe of all our calamities; and
"your indiſcretion was nothing more
"than the natural reſult of her miſtaken
"partiality."

In this manner, my beautiful friend, did the generous minded lady proceed, while my tears could only teſtify the warmth of my approbation. She was pleaſed to ſee me touched; and, more than once kiſſing away the drops from my cheeks, declared ſhe was never ſorry to ſee a young lady miſerable at a ſcene of diſtreſs, becauſe thoſe only could continue unmov'd, who were utterly deſtitute of humanity and underſtanding—Your father came in about this time; and ſeeing both our eyes red, aſſigned,

in

in the fury of his reſentment, a very different cauſe from the real one.—"What "do you cry for, my dear?" ſays he to your venerable mother, "If the villain, "who has brought all this affliction "upon our heads is not yet ſacrificed, be "ſatisfied that juſtice ſhall overtake him "in the end; for I have a gallant boy "ſtill living, who ſhall purſue him with "unceaſing vengeance till he has waſhed "away the diſgrace of our family in his "blood: O! had the inhoſpitable mon-"ſter but fallen to day, how light ſhould "I have made of my ſon's misfortune; "but he ſhall yet feel me—By the great "God of heaven and earth he ſhall; "and ſo, my dear, be pacified."

"O! Mr. Mildmay," replied your mother, "too much blood has been "ſpilled already; and, if ſomething "which I have caſually heard from Miſs "Beauclerk, of Sir Robert's repentance, be

" be true, I muſt ſay that it would be
" much better to think of an accom-
" modation than to expoſe ourſelves to
" any additional ſhare of diſtreſs; lady
" Haverſham is an excellent woman,
" and I have ſtrong reaſon to imagine,
" that her influence will have every
" weight we could wiſh with the
" thoughtleſs young man, her brother;
" ſuffer me, therefore, my dear, to make
" an enquiry into the foundation of
" Miſs Beauclerk's intelligence, that if
" we find——

" Find what, madam!" (interrupted your father, with an uncommon degree of vehemence) " You would not ſurely
" have the diſhonour of your family
" paſs unpuniſhed, nor think of receiv-
" ing a villain as your ſon-in-law, who
" has covered you with the moſt infa-
" mous diſgrace! Would you give your
" daughter to a ruffian, who has poſſibly

"murdered your ſon; or would you "baſely beg of lady Haverſham to ſpeak "a good word for us to her ſcoundrel "of a brother? Are we reduced at once "ſo low as to kneel where we have been "barbarouſly injured; and muſt we "think of ſupplicating a monſter for "compaſſion, whoſe hands have been "equally ſteeped in our reputation and "our blood? Fie, Mrs. Mildmay, fie! "this is a language unworthy both of "your character and your deſcent; and "could I find a thought of ſo diſho-"nourable a nature riſing in my boſom, "I ſhould do inſtant juſtice on the "traytor, and ſtab it to the heart."

Your mother made no reply to this but by a ſhower of tears; which your father being utterly unable to withſtand, he flew out of the room, leaving me to give the dear lady what conſolation I could, which in fact was but very trifling,

trifling, as I ſtood in no little need of conſolation myſelf. Such, my ſweet friend, is the ſtate of matters at Mildmay Hall. Your brother, though his wounds pain him conſiderably, ſlept a full hour this evening, ſo Butler juſt now acquainted me, adding, that he and the ſurgeon were to ſit up all night with him; and aſſuring me that there ſhould be no want of attendance on either of their parts.—"As for myſelf," ſays Butler, "I ſhall have but little in-"clination to ſleep while my poor maſter "continues in any danger; and as for the "ſurgeon, I will take care that he ſhall "wake whenever there is the ſmalleſt "neceſſity for his aſſiſtance." So ſaying, he gave a ſignificant look, as if he ſhould be angry with the gentleman in caſe of any neglect, and marched off to the houſekeeper for ſome old linen to cut up in bandages. You deſired me, at the concluſion of your letter, to inform

you, whether there is any other viſitor at the Hall—It is with pleaſure I can acquaint you that there is not. The morning after your departure, meſſengers were ſent to every body invited, but myſelf, to let them know that an unexpected circumſtance had happened, which muſt delay the wedding for ſome time; but that they ſhould receive early intelligence againſt the day of celebration. And now, my deareſt Louiſa, let me again inſiſt that you will bear up with all your fortitude againſt the hand of adverſity—Fortune, believe me, will yet wear a propitious countenance, and we ſhall all experience a degree of happineſs in proportion to the ſeverity of our preſent diſtreſs. Your mother, my ſweet girl, on her reverend knees, with ſtreaming eyes, and uplifted hands, is this moment bleſſing you; ſuch a woman's prayers to the Throne of Mercy muſt be effectual. — Providence looks with delight

delight upon all parental ſupplications; but where a parent is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed for every virtue, the petition is ſanctified into a kind of claim, and is no ſooner pronounced than rewarded. Good night, ſiſter of my ſoul, my ever amiable Louiſa. By the next poſt you ſhall hear from me again, and I hope infinitely more to your ſatisfaction.

HARRIOT BEAUCLERK.

LETTER XIV.

Miſs MILDMAY *to her Mother.*

IF I have yet delayed paying my humbleſt duty to my ever revered mama; if I have yet denied myſelf the unſpeakable ſatisfaction of approaching her by letter, it was neither from a want of the deepeſt reſpect, nor the ſtrongeſt inclination.— But, alas! covered with confuſion and diſhonour, ſinking beneath a conſciouſneſs of my guilt, and knowing myſelf utterly unworthy of her ſmalleſt conſideration, I wanted courage to addreſs her; and even bluſhed at my preſumption, when I ſuppoſed it might be poſſible for her to remember a miſerable wretch like me, with any diſtant traces of pity or affection— And, O! my mama, did you really, on your reverend knees, condeſcend to beg a bleſſing

a bleſſing for your unfortunate daughter; did you really, with ſtreaming eyes, implore the Throne of Mercy in my favour; and extend your benignant hands to pluck down comfort on my head? Could you pray for the reſtoration of her peace who has ſo barbarouſly deſtroyed your happineſs; and wiſh a length of proſperous years to an unnatural monſter, whoſe infamy has ſhortened your own date of days, and blackened the little remnant with affliction and diſgrace?—O! madam, where ſhall I hide myſelf from this exceſs of goodneſs!—Where ſhall I take refuge from this unbounded amplitude of generoſity! The ſeverity of reproach I could have borne, becauſe it is deſerved; and I could have withſtood the ſhock of indignation, becauſe it is merited. But this aſtoniſhing tenderneſs is inſupportable—it overcomes—it deſtroys me—and at this moment I am forced to

make a full pauſe, being unable to bear up againſt the conflict of my own heart, which is no leſs torn with the keenneſs of my gratitude, than tortured by the pungency of my remorſe.

A few drops of hartſhorn having ſomewhat relieved a faintingneſs that came over me juſt then, I now endeavour to reſume my letter, though totally at a loſs in what manner to proceed: for, alas! my dear mama, can I poſſibly mention any ſubject that will not aggravate the nature of my guilt, and add to the greatneſs of your affliction? If I aſk after my ever honoured father, the pangs with which I have filled his venerable boſom immediately occur—If I mention the beſt beloved and nobleſt of brothers, I find him weltering in blood on my account; and if I even addreſs myſelf to you, who have treated me with ſuch an infinite degree of unexampled

exampled generoſity, do I not find you languiſhing on the bed of ſickneſs, and drooping at the infamy of a daughter, who ſhould have been the happy ſource of your conſolation?——O! my dear mama, revoke your gracious, your ineſtimable bleſſing — Renounce me —curſe me—and deteſt me; for I am deteſtable in my own eyes, and am ready to commit ſome inſtant act of deſperation, when I recollect, what ruin I have brought upon you all—What a dreadful return have I made for all your unbounded tenderneſs and affection!. Yet, madam, preſumptuous as it muſt be in me to name either you, my father, or my brother, after what has paſt, ſtill I muſt take the liberty of offering up my prayers for the recovery of your peace; ſtill muſt I pray for the re-eſtabliſhment of my brother's health, who is ſo great an ornament to the family; if the goodneſs

goodneſs of that God, who ſees into the bottom of my afflictions, would be pleaſed to reſtore him, and to take me ſpeedily out of the world, I ſhould hope it was yet poſſible for you to be happy together, notwithſtanding the miſconduct of a guilty wretch, who is now ſo juſt an object of your contempt and deteſtation.

The good lady Haverſham, ever ſince my arrival in town, has been a conſtant viſitor at Mrs. Darnel's, and tries by every means in her power to alleviate the poignancy of my diſtreſs — She laments the behaviour of her brother with the ſincereſt concern, and has ſhewn me ſome letters from him, which give me reaſon to think he is very ſorry for it himſelf, and is deſirous of taking every poſſible ſtep to effect a reconciliation; but that, madam, is a matter not to be thought of now—He has ſhewn himſelf

himself unworthy of being a son to you and my papa; and, for any thing that should depend on my determination, could I gain the world by a union with him, or, what is more, could I recover my lost peace of mind, I should spurn him without hesitation, and think it an increase of my present infamy to retain him a moment in my remembrance—No, madam, though I have disgraced my family by the madness of one guilty moment, my mind is yet incapable of a premeditated baseness; and would scorn to vow duty and obedience, where it cannot look without an equal mixture of abhorrence and contempt. You do not know, my dear mama, how very scandalous a part he has acted. You do not know with how elaborate a meanness, with how ingenious a littleness, he has behaved in the course of this unfortunate transaction; but Miss Beauclerk, in a few days, will be able to make

make you acquainted with the minuteſt circumſtance. I am writing out the whole melancholy ſtory at her requeſt; and I know it will give your generous boſom ſome ſatisfaction to find, that though I am guilty, I have not by any ſubſequent action rendered myſelf deſpicable.

Lady Haverſham, madam, was this moment here; ſhe came to me in an abſolute ſtate of diſtraction, ſo that it was a full hour before Mrs. Darnel and I could reſtore her to any tollerable ſhare of tranquility—She had a letter in her hand directed to Mr. Melmoth, of whom you heard her brother ſpeak ſo very highly when he was down in the country. This letter, it ſeems, was a circumſtantial account of the unhappy quarrel between my brother and Sir Robert; from which we learn, that the worthleſs man was coming after me in a great

a great hurry to London, to throw himſelf at my feet, and to implore my forgiveneſs for his barbarous behaviour. O! that my brother had not ſeen him at Reading; his life had then been entirely out of a danger; and I ſhould have the pleaſure at leaſt of mortifying his cruel antagoniſt with a repulſe.

The counteſs, when ſhe came a little to herſelf, entered into a long converſation with me about the impropriety of refuſing her brother, ſince he was now brought to ſo happy a conviction of his errors, and was attached to me ſtill with ſo unabating an ardency of affection—"I "am ſure, my dear Louiſa," argued ſhe, "notwithſtanding you have very great "cauſe for being offended with him, "you have not yet eraſed him from your "heart; and it would, of conſequence, "be puniſhing yourſelf, not to think of "forgiving him in the end." I begged,

at

cauſe to think that you remember me with regret. Do not, therefore, my ever-to-be-revered mama, ſuffer yourſelf to feel any uneaſineſs on my account. Do not let the recollection of a guilty creature like me prey upon your health, and render the family misfortune irreparable. My dear brother, madam, deſerves all your tenderneſs; and, could a union be brought about between him and my amiable Miſs Beauclerk, ſhe would ſupply every thing which I once endeavoured to be—before I was unworthy to be called your dutiful daughter,

LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Mr. MELMOTH, *to Sir* ROBERT HAROLD.

Dear HAROLD,

YOU are certainly one of the happieſt fellows in the world: every thing is in a fair way of being adjuſted to your wiſhes; and, before the end of ſix weeks, I am in hopes to give you joy on your marriage with the amiable Miſs Mildmay.

The moment I received your laſt letter I went to lady Haverſham with it; and you may eaſily judge how much that excellent woman was affected at the contents. Tremblingly attentive to your ſafety, it was with the greateſt difficulty ſhe could go through your account of the duel; and, generouſly ſenſible to the diſtreſſes of the Mildmay

family, she felt very severely for the misfortune of the colonel — "O! Mr. "Melmoth," cried she, "what must "poor Louisa suffer, what must the "good Mrs. Mildmay suffer, on this "shocking occasion! My brother, con- "scious of his guilt, should have borne "every thing; and yet, upon the whole, "he has acted with more temper than I "expected — See Sir," continued she, "how wide, how general a ruin may "be occasioned by one bad action! "Did young fellows consider what a "number of evils may possibly spring "from the commission of a single "crime, a moment's recollection would "be sufficient to deter them from their "most favourite pursuits; but, alas! "totally regardless of consequences in "the progress of their licentious de- "signs, they think the young lady is the "only person to be injured, without con- "sidering that there is a mother to die at

"her

"her deſtruction; and a father, or a "brother, to madden at her diſgrace."

After lady Haverſham had given way for ſome time to her emotion, I aſked her if it would not be the moſt prudent ſtep that could be taken, for her ladyſhip to ſet out inſtantly to Mildmay Hall with your letter in her hand, and fairly ſhew the father and mother how little you were to be blamed in your rencounter with the colonel. I obſerved, that, notwithſtanding their reſentment againſt you, they had every reaſon to treat her with the moſt unreſerved affection; and I offered my ſervice as an eſcorte, if ſhe imagined I could accompany her with any degree of propriety. The motion met her approbation, and ſhe accepted of my offer with great ſatisfaction; ſaying, that, as Miſs Mildmay's misfortune could not poſſibly remain a ſecret, the preſence of a man

ſo intimate with your family could by no means be indelicate. She, however, put off the expedition till the morning, being firſt of all deſirous to ſee Louiſa, whom ſhe had not viſited that day.—And here I muſt inform you, Harold, that your ſiſter has bought a very elegant chariot, and ſettled matters juſt as you could wiſh with Mrs. Darnel. When lady Haverſham came to that part of your letter which mentions ſuch a proviſion—it was too much for her, ſhe laid the paper down, and burſting into a flood of tears, exclaimed—"Why, this is well thought "of Mr. Melmoth—there is ſoul in this! "what pity it is that he will not be "uniformly good, and take as much "pains to avoid the commiſſion of an "injury as he manifeſts inclination to "repair it!"—But to buſineſs.

Yeſterday morning we ſet out in a chariot and ſix for Mildmay Hall, and arrived

arrived there about two o'clock, quite ſurprizing Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay, as you may naturally imagine, by our unexpected appearance. The old gentleman at firſt carried matters very high, and ſeemed to think himſelf under a neceſſity of keeping a prodigious diſtance; but lady Haverſham, who has a degree of conſideration that equals her benignity, kindly made allowances for his behaviour; and, ſeizing him by the arm with all that candour of cordiality which generally diſarms an ill-grounded reſentment, begged of him to conſider her as a faithful friend to his family, who deeply partook in his misfortunes, though theſe misfortunes were unhappily created by the profligacy of her brother; — "My dear Mr. Mildmay," expoſtulated the admirable woman, "I am almoſt as much to be "pitied as yourſelf; you know how "much my heart was in an alliance

" with your houſe, and you alſo know
" how tender a friendſhip I ever enter-
" tained for the amiable Louiſa; don't
" therefore, inſtead of giving me conſo-
" lation, add ungenerouſly to my diſtreſs;
" but conſider me as a perſon deeply ſen-
" ſible of all your wrongs; and warmly
" animated with all your reſentments.
" The author of the preſent calamity is
" my brother; but I am ſure you can-
" not think me the ſiſter of his crime;
" nor imagine, that, becauſe I am allied
" to him in blood, I muſt likewiſe be
" allied to the guilty part of his charac-
" ter. Look at me, I beſeech you, with
" complaeency; and tell me that my
" preſence is not unwelcome in the
" country."

This addreſs there was no poſſibility of reſiſting—Mr. Mildmay's heart was melted; and, in ſpite of all his pride, he took hold of her hand with an air of

the

the greateſt reſpect, held it to his lips, and endeavoured to make an apology—A riſing flood of grief, however, choaked the paſſage of his words; he broke into a ſob of inexpreſſible affliction; and haſtily retired out of the room. You know, Harold, how readily the mother, as you call it, comes into my eyes; you know, beſides, that I am twenty good years older than you, and have been once a father. I could not, therefore, ſtand the exceſs of poor Mr. Mildmay's emotion; my handkerchief was out in an inſtant, and, notwithſtanding my utmoſt efforts to ſuppreſs my concern, I blubbered ſo heartily as to be under a neceſſity of retiring alſo, unacquainted as I was with the houſe, and ridiculous as I muſt have made myſelf to the ſervants. As to Mrs. Mildmay, nothing can be more tender or affecting than the reception of your ſiſter.—The two ladies, at their firſt meeting, remain-

at laſt, that her ladyſhip would ſay no more on the ſubject; that it pained me exceſſively, and that I could never hear her brother's name without reflecting on my own diſgrace, and the general diſhonour of my family: ſhe then obligingly waved the diſcourſe; but ſaid, that ſhe and Mr. Melmoth were to ſet off for Mildmay Hall in the morning; and that ſhe hoped to find you and my papa more propitious to her entreaties, than what the juſtice of my reſentment would at preſent ſuffer me to be; I then only ſaid, that I had diſobliged my papa and mama too much not to wiſh for ſome opportunity of making an attonement; but that the circumſtance ſhe hinted at was a method, which I was pretty ſure would not meet with their approbation: however, ſhe left me, after making ſome profeſſions of a nature ſo extremely generous, yet delicate, that I could not help lamenting,

after

after her departure, to find ſo very worthleſs a man as her brother engroſſed ſo great a ſhare of her affection. For my own part, I once loved him, once tenderly loved him; but why do I torture my recollection with his name; his baſeneſs has cured me of that paſſion, and I am now alive to nothing but the ſenſe of my diſhonour, and the afflictions of my family.

That theſe afflictions may be ſpeedily removed, my deareſt mama, is my inceſſant prayer; life has now no other charm but the hope of ſeeing your happineſs, the happineſs of my papa, and the happineſs of my brother, reeſtabliſhed; could I once ſee theſe deſirable events, I ſhould ſink contented into my grave; for, though I ſhall never know a moment's peace in this world, I ſhall not enter upon the next with any ſatisfaction, if I have but the ſmalleſt

cauſe

cauſe to think that you remember me with regret. Do not, therefore, my ever-to-be-revered mama, ſuffer yourſelf to feel any uneaſineſs on my account. Do not let the recollection of a guilty creature like me prey upon your health, and render the family misfortune irreparable. My dear brother, madam, deſerves all your tenderneſs; and, could a union be brought about between him and my amiable Miſs Beauclerk, ſhe would ſupply every thing which I once endeavoured to be—before I was unworthy to be called your dutiful daughter,

LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Mr. MELMOTH, *to Sir* ROBERT HAROLD.

Dear HAROLD,

YOU are certainly one of the happieſt fellows in the world: every thing is in a fair way of being adjuſted to your wiſhes; and, before the end of ſix weeks, I am in hopes to give you joy on your marriage with the amiable Miſs Mildmay.

The moment I received your laſt letter I went to lady Haverſham with it; and you may eaſily judge how much that excellent woman was affected at the contents. Tremblingly attentive to your ſafety, it was with the greateſt difficulty ſhe could go through your account of the duel; and, generouſly ſenſible to the diſtreſſes of the Mildmay

" plea to add, which I am ſure muſt
" operate on your tenderneſs, as a huſ-
" band; and upon your juſtice, as a man:
" —Turn, Sir, to this venerable, this
" excellent woman, the companion of
" your youth, the partner of your ſor-
" rows, the poſſeſſor of your heart—ſee
" where ſhe is, ſinking under the ſtern-
" neſs of your reſolution, and bleeding
" with an apprehenſion of future miſ-
" fortunes, as well as with a ſenſibility
" of the preſent diſtreſs—She, Sir, has
" a mother's claim in the ſon, whoſe
" life you are ſo willing to expoſe. Do
" not drive her into abſolute diſtraction
" —Her anguiſh is already exceſſive,
" and her death muſt be inevitable, if
" you think of waſhing away her
" daughter's ſtain with nothing but the
" blood of her ſon. On my knees,
" therefore, Mr. Mildmay," and down
the wonderful woman dropped, " let
" me beg of you to think of a recon-
" ciliation

" ciliation. — My brother is deeply " wounded by the conſciouſneſs of his " own guilt; and will, I am certain, " from motives of gratitude, as well as " affection, make a good ſon, and a " deſerving huſband. Do not, my dear " Mr. Mildmay, becauſe one affliction " has interrupted your happineſs, raſh- " ly devote yourſelf to wretchedneſs for " life; but rather ſeize the beſt means " of diſpelling the cloud which at pre- " ſent overcaſts your peace; and en- " deavour at recovering the genial ſun- " ſhine of that tranquility which has " been ſo recently and ſo fatally loſt."

Mr. Mildmay (who all the time of your ſiſter's kneeling, in vain attempted to raiſe her up) ſeemed greatly ſtruck with what ſhe ſaid; but, though his reaſon was convinced, his pride nevertheleſs held an obſtinate ſtruggle, and he ſeveral times attempted to quit the room

room—Lady Haverſham and I as often prevented him from going out; we prevailed upon him with difficulty, to hear the principal part of your letter read; and Mrs. Mildmay herſelf kneeling to him, and in very pathetic terms requeſting him to oblige lady Haverſham, he was at laſt overcome, and conſented that you might be ſent for as ſoon as we pleaſed, deſiring only that the ceremony might be delayed till the recovery of the colonel.

When we had thus ſettled the material affair, our converſation naturally turned upon the colonel's caſe, and the abilities of his attendants.—Mr. Mildmay ſaid, that, though the wound at firſt appeared extremely dangerous, as it was very near the groin; nevertheleſs, the ſurgeons now told him, that there was but little doubt of a fine cure, provided he eſcaped a fever—

"And

"And this" ſaid the old gentleman, "I "am no way uneaſy about, as the wea- "ther is very cold and his pulſe ſo very "temperate: but," added he, "ſuppoſe "you go and ſee him; there is nobody "with him but Miſs Beauclerk: and he "had ſo fine a morning's ſleep that we "ſhan't in the leaſt fatigue him with "our company." We accordingly went, and were received, as I expected, with great coldneſs, though with great civi- lity—The ſight of people ſo very near to you naturally hurting that impatience which we all labour under where we have received any thing which looks like a diſgrace. Lady Haverſham, how- ever, went up to him as if ſhe had been his ſiſter; and expreſſed her concern for the cauſe of his misfortune, with ſo un- affected an air of cordiality as reconciled him a little to his viſitors. We then acquainted him with the buſineſs of our journey, talked matters over again, and

read

read all your letter but that part where the proviſion for his ſiſter is mentioned: he was extremely attentive to your account of the duel, and begged more than once to hear a repetition of ſome particular paſſages. When I had done, he pauſed a little, and ſaid, you were *very* exact in the relation; and that, had he imagined you were actuated by a ſincere concern for your indiſcretion, and were really going up to town with a view of entreating Louiſa's forgiveneſs, he would not have been ſo raſh: "But," ſays he, "my heart was in the match—"and to find every thing broken off "while I was flattering my imagination "with the happineſs my family was to "poſſeſs—to find the rupture alſo ſo "diſhonourable to us; and to think that "a ſiſter, who was my principal pride, "ſhould be guilty of ſuch a crime, "made me abſolutely mad; ſo that I "almoſt wonder how I refrained from

"ſhooting

"ſhooting Sir Robert through the head "before I even offered him the choice "of a piſtol."

Notwithſtanding the colonel's ſeeming frankneſs, I could eaſily ſee he was ſecretly diſſatisfied that he had not been conſulted by his father in the concluſion of our accommodation. When the old gentlemen told him what he had conſented to, he was extremely grave, and obſerved, "That to be ſure it was "better to ſettle matters any how, than "to think of going farther with family "reſentments." The tone and look with which he delivered this were viſibly ſarcaſtic; and I could, however, readily perceive he ſomewhat diſconcerted his father. We took no notice of the expreſſion, however; lady Haverſham thinking with me, that thoſe may be allowed to complain a little who feel a great deal. Dinner being ready by this

time, we took our leave of the colonel, and ſat down in a very ſociable manner to a very good repaſt. Your ſiſter was all life; and Mrs. Mildmay, who has been a very fine woman, was animated with a chearfulneſs that really filled me with pleaſure; as, from the character lady Haverſham gave me of her worth, I could not but ſhare very ſenſibly in her afflictions.

In ſhort, we were all extremely happy but Miſs Beauclerk. This young lady, who ought to be the gayeſt perſon in company, was remarkably thoughtful and reſerved; ſhe ſcarcely touched a morſel of any thing, and even more than once let a ſigh eſcape her pretty audible: ſhe is a very fine girl indeed, Harold; and, if ſhe is but half as good as ſhe is handſome, it would be ten thouſand pities that any thing ſhould give her the leaſt uneaſineſs. You cannot conceive how exceſſively

exceſſively I am taken with her—there is ſo much real good ſenſe, ſo much genuine delicacy, and ſo much true benevolence in every word and action, that was it poſſible for me ever to marry a ſecond time, or poſſible for her to look on ſuch an old fellow, I really believe ſhe would be the woman in the world whom I ſhould firſt think of—but what have I do with the ſex! In my youth I loſt the woman of my heart—When I laſt ſaw her ſhe was juſt ſuch another young creature as this Miſs Beauclerk; all beauty and beneficence, all ſenſibility and love: Miſs Beauclerk has in fact her very form, her very face, the ſame irreſiſtable ſweetneſs of voice, and elegance of manner which once diſtinguiſhed my Nancy; and which, though long ſince buried in the grave, have been continually preſent to my imagination. Be good natured, Harold, and bear with me a little on this tender ſubject—You

know I ſeldom break out, and therefore may now and then be entitled to a little indulgence, eſpecially as I am always ſo ready to put up with your everlaſting impertinence.

The ladies retiring a little after dinner, and leaving Mr. Mildmay and I to chat over a bottle of Burgundy, I took the liberty to make ſome enquiry about Miſs Beauclerk, aſſuring the old gentleman that I was ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed in her favour.—"Why truly, Mr. "Melmoth," returned he, "I don't "know a ſweeter, better tempered girl "in the world than this young lady; "my Louiſa and ſhe contracted an in- "timacy at the boarding ſchool, when "they were both very young, and have "ever ſince been remarkably diſtinguiſh- "ed for the cloſeneſs of their friend- "ſhip; the one never knowing joy or "a ſorrow in which the other did not

"immediately

" immediately enhance the ſatisfaction,
" or mitigate the diſtreſs. I am ſure, in
" the late unhappy affair, my daughter's
" misfortune affected Miſs Beauclerk
" as cloſely as if Louiſa had actually
" been her ſiſter—During the time of
" her being here, ſhe has applied her-
" ſelf with ſuch aſſiduity to comfort
" and take care of my poor wife, that I
" conſider her as a principal inſtrument
" in Mrs. Mildmay's preſervation—Her
" mother, Sir, loſt her huſband while
" Harriot was yet an infant at the breaſt;
" he died it ſeems in the Eaſt-Indies,
" and left the good lady in ſuch very
" ſlender circumſtances, that, had not a
" relation of her own, who died alſo
" about the ſame time, left her a fortune
" of 20000l. in the funds, ſhe muſt
" have gone into ſome little way of
" buſineſs for the maintenance of herſelf
" and her daughter. Upon the intereſt
" of this ſum ſhe keeps a carriage, and

" has a moſt delightful retirement about
" thirty miles off—What is extremely re-
" markable, is, that, though ſhe was not
" much above twenty when her huſband
" died, and when ſhe came into poſſeſ-
" ſion of this fortune, yet, ſo far from
" acting like the generality of women,
" and liſtening to the addreſſes of every
" coxcomb who might have deſigns
" either upon her perſon or her purſe,
" ſhe retired immediately from London
" to the ſpot I have been ſpeaking of,
" and there continued ever ſince, con-
" fining her viſits within a very narrow
" circle, and dedicating her attention to
" the education of her daughter. Within
" a mile of her houſe my Louiſa was
" at ſchool when a child; and the inti-
" macy between the little ones naturally
" creating an acquaintance between the
" parents, Mrs. Beauclerk and our fa-
" mily have been upon the moſt unre-
" ſerved footing of friendſhip theſe

" ſixteen

"fixteen years; and, I dare ſay, ſhall "continue in friendſhip till the end of "our lives, as there is but one circum-"ſtance which can poſſibly diſturb the "harmony of our correſpondence."

As it would have been extremely rude in a ſtranger to aſk what this circumſtance was, I did not interrupt Mr. Mildmay; nevertheleſs I was lucky enough, in the naturally communicativeneſs of his temper, to have my curioſity gratified; his heart was now open, and he conſidered me as a good natured friendly man who might be truſted with a ſecret; drawing his chair therefore cloſer to mine, and lowering his voice, he proceeded to unboſom himſelf to the following purport.

"You muſt know, Mr. Melmoth, that, "during the intimacy between Mrs. "Beauclerk's family and mine, I have

" diſcovered that my ſon entertains very
" favourable ſentiments of her daugh-
" ter; and between ourſelves I can ſee
" plainly enough that her daughter is
" no way diſinclined to my ſon. I have
" been a young fellow myſelf, Mr. Mel-
" moth; and, in my time—you under-
" ſtand me—but that is nothing to the
" purpoſe—As I was ſaying, this mu-
" tual good opinion between Harry and
" Miſs Beauclerk, is a thing which gives
" me no little uneaſineſs—the young
" lady to be ſure poſſeſſes a very high
" place in my eſteem, and I don't know
" a woman in the kingdom whom I
" ſhould be better pleaſed to have for
" a daughter; but the misfortune is ſhe
" does not carry ſufficient weight of
" metal, and I have ſome family views
" in my head, which, though I am pretty
" well in the world, require a conſidera-
" ble addition of fortune. My houſe,
" Mr. Melmoth, is a very antient one;

" there

"there have been more than two peer-
"ages in it; and I have myſelf ſome
"expectation of a title. Now, Sir, as
"the ſupport of ſuch a dignity cannot
"allow me to marry my ſon to a woman
"of little fortune; on this account I
"am greatly concerned that any ſecret
"correſpondence ſhould be carried on
"between him and Miſs Beauclerk. I
"ſhould be very ſorry to oppoſe his
"inclinations, or to wound her ſenſibi-
"lity; but you know the raiſing of
"one's family is a very eſſential point;
"and that, ridiculous as a coronet may
"appear to ſome people, it is never-
"theleſs entitled to priviledges, which
"are far from being diſagreeable—This
"is not all—a noble lord in the neigh-
"bourhood, who is able to give his
"daughter a prodigious ſum of money,
"has lately intimated, a deſire of unit-
"ing his family with mine; and I think
"ſo very well of the affair, that I

"mentioned

"mentioned it yesterday to my son, "when I found him launching out into "some passionate encomiums on Miss "Beauclerk." — Mr. Mildmay pausing in this place, I could not help observing, that, though the plan which was thus laid down for the aggrandization of his family, might in itself be extremely right, nevertheless, if his son entertained a cordial affection for the young lady, the possession of her hand might be more conducive to his happiness than the possession of a title; and that therefore it might be difficult to make him sacrifice the interest of his heart even to gratify the laudable ambition of his father—But the old gentleman stopped me short, by declaring, He believed the colonel would do any thing to oblige him. "However," says he, "if I should be unhappily disappointed of his obedience in the matter "we have been talking of, I know how

"to

"to punish his obstinacy when I come "to dispose of my fortune." Here our conversation ended, for the ladies coming in we were obliged to talk of something else; though I should have told you, that Mr. Mildmay more than once insinuated a fear, that his lady secretly approved of the passion subsisting between Miss Beauclerk and the colonel.

. . . . . .

I could moralize in this place, Sir Robert, on the prepostrous behaviour of those fathers who are willing to give their children every thing but happiness. Reflections of this nature, however, are too common to be useful; and it would be just as new to tell you, that the parts of a day consist of twenty-four hours, as to tell you that the very fondness of such fathers is the most insupportable of all tyrannies. Poor Miss Beauclerk—and is the tawdry gewgaw of a coronet to be put in competition with

with the charms of exalted virtue, elevated ſenſe, and ſweetneſs ineffable! But love would be too exquiſite an enjoyment, Harold, had not Providence wiſely thrown theſe bars in our way, and tempered the inexpreſſible raptures which it beſtows with ſome occaſional mixtures of infelicity.

Lady Haverſham juſt now called me aſide, and hinted that ſhe had ſpoken to Mrs. Mildmay relative to ſome expreſſions which Louiſa had dropped in your ſiſter's laſt interview with her, indicating the moſt poſitive determination of never ſeeing you more. Mrs. Mildmay is to write to her on this ſubject, and therefore ſhe can but little doubt of Louiſa's altering her determination; the reſolution of her family in your favour was the principal point to gain; and ſince we could work upon their pride, there can be no doubt of influencing her

her ſenſibility. A woman, Harold, can forgive every thing where ſhe really loves; the ladies have a ſoftneſs about them which turns even contempt into kindneſs, and gives the tenderneſs of their hearts a conſtant ſuperiority over the goodneſs of their underſtandings. I ſhould be ſorry, however, that all coxcombs were for reducing this precept into practice; as we have already but too many fools among the fair who are deſirous of ſtamping their weakneſs with the immediate image of deſtiny, and ſolicitous to call that an abſolute decree of fate which ariſes from their own apparent want of reſolution.

I have been this moment at a conſultation of colonel Mildmay's ſurgeons, and have the very great pleaſure of informing you that he is entirely out of danger.—You may therefore, by the next Helvoetſluys packet, make a trip

to

to Harwich, since at the utmost it can't be above twelve hours from Rotterdam to Helvoet. If you should stop at the Hague, pray call at Fitzpatrick's in the Hoogstraat; who is as modest, as sensible, and as well behaved a man as I ever saw at the head of a tavern; and who, without mentioning any body's name, will treat you with the utmost civility: if you know the man already my character will be needless; if you do not, you will find a very good house, and so far be obliged to me for this accommodation.

As we have done our business at Mildmay Hall, your sister and I shall set out for London, in order to wait upon Louisa, and acquaint her with the determination of her father. Mrs. Mildmay has a letter to send by us to her daughter, which will put a finishing hand to the reconciliation; so that, Bob, you may

may look upon the whole affair as concluded to your wish; yet it is ten to one that, now happiness is again within your reach, but what you strive to start difficulties, and endeavour to destroy all that lady Haversham and I have been labouring to bring about with such an unremitting degree of sedulity.

Take care, however, dear Harold, how you act at this time; and do not idly play the prodigal with your own happiness.—Youth can never excuse a bad action, though it may extenuate the indiscretion of a foolish one; and the man who is twice guilty of the same crime, is in much more danger of making himself abhorred, than in rendering others wretched or contemptible; take the hint therefore, Bob, and believe me, with the utmost cordiality,

Your real Friend,

C. MELMOTH.

LETTER XVI.

Mr. MELMOTH, *in Continuation, to Sir* ROBERT HAROLD.

Dear HAROLD,

IF you have not yet ſet out from Rotterdam, you may as well continue where you are, or go to any other part of the continent which is beſt adapted to your inclination; England is not a place which I would have you return to yet awhile, if you really love Miſs Mildmay, and would be concerned to find her actually allied to infamy and proſtitution.

Your ſiſter and I arrived in town this morning; and, unable to contain the ſatisfaction with which our boſoms naturally ſwelled at your approaching felicity,

city; we immediately drove to Louiſa's, with a view of diſpelling her unhappineſs, by acquainting her with the fortunate reconciliation effected between her and her family — But judge our aſtoniſhment, when, inſtead of meeting with her, Mrs. Darnel came down ſtairs with an air of the utmoſt affliction, and informed us that Miſs Mildmay had eloped in a poſt-chaiſe and ſix, with a gentleman richly dreſſed, the preceding evening—"Having no authority to "watch her motions," ſaid Mrs. Darnel, "and imagining from her ſpecious air "of penitence, if I even had, that every "attention of that nature would be ut-"terly unneceſſary, I went to hear a "lecture at our pariſh-church after tea, "never once dreaming that during my "abſence ſhe would think of running "away from a houſe into which ſhe had "entered a voluntary viſitor, and in "which there was no likelihood of her

" receiving the ſmalleſt diſguſt—You " may, however, eaſily gueſs my con- " ſternation, when my maid Jenny, the " moment I came home, ran up and in- " formed me that Miſs Mildmay had " gone off with a gentleman in a poſt- " chaiſe. I naturally concluded, that, " had it been any relation, I ſhould have " received ſome notice of her intended " departure; and therefore, as ſhe went " away in ſo unaccountable a manner, I " as naturally aſcribed her flight to " ſome preconcerted deſign; eſpecially as " Jenny informed me, that a gentleman " in brown and gold had for two or " three nights been ſeen to hang " about the houſe, and to peep in at " the windows with a degree of breed- " ing much below the elegance of his " appearance — Notwithſtanding theſe " unpromiſing accounts, I nevertheleſs " ſat up till four o'clock, rather hoping " than expecting the unfortunate young

" lady's

"lady's return; but, alas! I might have "ſat up till this moment, without reap- "ing the leaſt advantage from my "anxiety or my fatigue; ſhe never "once approached the houſe, and which "way ſhe has gone I am by no means "able to conjecture."

And this, Sir Robert, is the end of all our expectations. For my own part, ſtrenuouſly ſolicitous as I was but a few hours ago in her favour, I now ſincerely congratulate with you on your fortunate eſcape; I now begin to think you were right in rejecting her from the firſt, and am perfectly ſatisfied that the error, which I thought the effect of her partiality for you, was nothing more than the reſult of her own conſtitution. Lady Haverſham, however, will not ſubſcribe to my opinion of her levity, tho' ſhe knows not any cauſe to which

her elopement can be ſo probably attributed — Nevertheleſs, ſhe thinks all enquiry after her needleſs; and almoſt wiſhes that ſhe had not taken the journey into Oxfordſhire — "For this "new diſappointment, Mr. Melmoth," ſays ſhe, "will come with additional "weight upon her family; and, if it does "not entirely kill the poor mother, it "will certainly drive her diſtracted."

Mrs. Darnel, who appears to be a decent well behaved woman, notwithſtanding your ſuſpicions, is to ſend down an account of Louiſa's elopement to Mildmay Hall. What conſequences it may produce there I know not; but of this I am certain, that you have every reaſon in nature to be happy in the timely diſcovery of her levity—Had ſuch a diſcovery been made after your marriage with her, I ſuppoſe the reſult would

have been her immediate death, and your certain execution. — You would have ſacrificed her inſtantly to your fury; and your life would have been the penalty of your raſhneſs. Return thanks, therefore, to Providence for having ſuch a fortunate eſcape, and do not meanly regret the loſs of a woman whom you know to be guilty, when you could ſo readily give her up at a time that you thought her innocence, in a manner, unqueſtionable. But you ſee, Harold, that innocence, like contrition, may be eaſily affected; and that thoſe may ſeem the moſt ſtrenuous votaries of virtue, who are in fact the leaſt unhappy at its loſs.

If any thing new ſhould occur before you think of returning home, you need not doubt of my readineſs to communicate it. Lady Haverſham is extremely affected with Louiſa's behaviour, but

attempts very little, if any thing, in her defence; she sends her best wishes to you by this letter; and desires me to assure you, that she is as much your affectionate sister as I am

Your faithful Friend,

C. MELMOTH.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

Miſs HARRIOT BEAUCLERK *to her Mother.*

Dear MAMA,

A DISTRESS of a more piercing nature than ever has fallen upon this unhappy family. You will ſcarcely conceive, and I have ſcarcely power to inform you; but my wretched friend Miſs Mildmay, while lady Haverſham was down here, as I told you in my laſt letter, ſettling every thing to our wiſhes, and reſtoring every body to peace, eloped from Mrs. Darnel's, in London, with a ſtrange gentleman, in a chariot and ſix, while her couſin was at church; and where ſhe is gone there is no likelihood of diſcovering; Mrs. Darnel's account of this affair reached us this morning;

and from the pain which I know your own worthy heart will feel on this melancholy occaſion, you may eaſily imagine what an effect it had on her poor father and mother; upon her brother and myſelf. I would, if poſſible, have kept it from the colonel, as I thought the knowledge of ſo fatal an accident might materially retard his recovery—But Mr. Mildmay's rage was too violent, and the venerable lady's anguiſh too exceſſive, to admit of ſuch a ſalutary ſecrecy; ſo that, in leſs than five minutes, he was made acquainted with the minuteſt circumſtances; and the agitation of his mind has been ſo prodigious ever ſince, that his phyſicians begin to be apprehenſive about the conſequences.

Indeed, my dear mama, I am, inexpreſſibly wretched from the part which I am to act in the general calamity—every body turns to me for conſolation,—when

when my own bosom is torn with a thousand distresses—and expects that I should be able to administer comfort, when I am equally, if not more, miserable myself. You, my dearest mama, must sooth my afflictions — You must enable me, by the magnanimity of your example, and the wisdom of your advice, to bear up against this unexpected stroke of misfortune, which now falls on me with an aggravated heaviness, as it comes in the hour of my utmost security, and invades me in the most unsuspecting moment of my hopes—I was feasting my imagination, madam, with numberless prospects of future felicity; and preparing my heart for nothing but happiness and you—When, alas! the golden scene is instantly ravished from my eyes, and the whole void as instantly filled up with disappointment and despair.

When

When I conſider this unaccountable ſtep of Louiſa's, I am loſt in perplexity and doubt — Mrs. Darnel's letter acquaints us that ſhe went away of her own accord; that ſhe was not carried off by force, but that ſhe abſolutely eloped; and the maid even deſcribes the gentleman with whom ſhe went, as a tall handſome man, dreſt in brown, richly laced with gold; ſhe ſays alſo, that he was a very fair man, and wore a bob wig. All this is mighty odd—I have known her from her infancy up; have ſhared every ſecret of her heart, and never conceived that ſhe entertained the leaſt affection for any body but Sir Robert Harold—Him it cannot be, as by Mr. Melmoth's account he ſet out for Holland the moment after the unhappy duel between him and the colonel; and beſides, he has a complexion remarkably black, and wears his own hair. When I put all theſe things

things together, my dear mama, I am aſtoniſhed—Louiſa would hardly go off with a man for whom ſhe felt no affection; and the whole tenor of her life has been ſo generouſly frank, and open; and ſo repugnant to every thing like hypocriſy or artifice; that I could ſtake my exiſtence Sir Robert is the only man for whom ſhe cheriſhed a favourable ſentiment—Beſides, madam, if you were to ſee the letter which ſhe ſent her mother, you would be ſatisfied, that, notwithſtanding her unhappy lapſe with that gentleman, ſhe is infinitely above the appearance of diſſimulation —— Her error is there acknowleged in ſuch forcible terms; and lamented with ſuch afenſe of unextenuating penitence, that her faults almoſt render her amiable, and the only emotions which we feel are thoſe of pity and admiration.

For

For theſe reaſons, I am poſitive my amiable friend can be no way depraved in her principles; yet, on the other hand, Mrs. Darnel is a woman of known ſobriety and character; is received among people of the firſt diſtinction, in conſequence of her good behaviour; and ſhe mentions Louiſa's elopement with ſo poſitive a degree of certainty, that there can be no poſſibility of diſputing the fact—God grant that this contradiction may be happily reconciled. My own ſoul is not dearer in my eſtimation than the happineſs of Miſs Mildmay; and I don't know that I could be able to ſurvive any inſtance of her premediated unworthineſs — Premeditated unworthineſs! No, my ever amiable Louiſa, you are incapable of a deliberate guilt; and the bare ſuppoſition was a blaſphemy againſt the purity of our mutual affection—The heart which can queſtion the virtue of a friend till it

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Theſe arguments, my dear mama, I have repeatedly urged in the preſent ſtate of things to the good Mrs. Mildmay—But ſhe ſhakes her head when I want her to reduce the precept into practice; and, while the large drops courſe one another down her venerable cheeks, ſhe tells me the ſentiment ſounds prettily enough upon the ear, but is little calculated to convince the underſtanding. I wiſh, my dear mama, you could come over to us; there never was a

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greater neceſſity for your ſupporting preſence than now —— Mrs. Mildmay ſeems in a very declining way, and her ſituation alarms me the more ſtrongly, as ſhe does every thing in her power to put on an air of the utmoſt compoſure and ſerenity.

As you, my dear mama, are one of thoſe excellent women who bring up a daughter rather in a ſtate of reſpectful familiarity with you, than endeavour to eſtabliſh an authority by keeping her in a diſtant degree of abject ſubjection— As you are generous enough to receive thoſe inſtances of confidence as a favour which you can command as a right, and can blend all the tenderneſs of the parent with all the freedom of the friend, I am enabled to talk to you on a ſubject which few young women ever care to mention to a mother, though a mother's

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You have often, my dear madam, kindly hinted your apprehenſion, that the merits of colonel Mildmay were making too deep an impreſſion on my heart; and that I ſhould by all means reſiſt every impulſe of a tender nature, in his favour, as there was but too much reaſon to apprehend that the diſparity of our fortunes would be a material bar to our union, notwithſtanding the harmony ſubſiſting ſo long between our two families. Your advice, my ever honoured mama, I was convinced was perfectly juſt; nevertheleſs—but why ſhould I think of concealing any thing from my beſt friend — from the only perſon in the world who by nature and inclination muſt be the readieſt to rejoice at my felicity, or to participate in my diſtreſs—Yes, madam, I muſt own,

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in ſpite of all your judicious precautions, my heart was inſenſibly engaged, and I loved before I was aware that the colonel had any other place in my affections, than what was due to the brother of Louiſa — You, madam, I am ſure, muſt have ſeen, upon ſeveral occaſions, what an awkward conſtraint I have laboured under when I have been in his company — Your penetration could not be eluded, though I then fondly thought nobody could ſee into my ſentiments, and piqued myſelf upon the addreſs with which I behaved in ſo very critical a ſituation.

Indeed, the reſpectful tenderneſs with which the colonel all along treated me, contributed not a little to raiſe him in my eſteem — Upon a thouſand little occaſions he gave me proof of his good opinion, though he never made me the moſt diſtant tendre of his heart; but judging

judging of his ſentiments by my own; or poſſibly believing, becauſe I wiſhed it might be ſo, that he really ſaw me with more than a common degree of friendſhip; I ſuffered the flame imperceptibly to ſpread, and was ſolicitous only of concealing my weakneſs from his obſervation; but matters, madam, have, at laſt, come to ſomething of a criſis, and I have the ſatisfaction of *knowing* that my tenderneſs is at leaſt returned, whether I am ever bleſt with the object of it or not.

The ſecond day after the colonel's coming down wounded, before he was yet pronounced out of danger, he ſent his compliments to me, and begged I would favour him with a viſit, as he had ſomething of importance to acquaint me with. The light in which I was conſidered by every body in the family, joined to the nature of his ſituation, would

have made it affectation to the laſt degree, had I not immediately complied with his requeſt—I therefore went, and the attendants being ordered out of the room, he begged of me to ſeat myſelf cloſe to the bedſide; where, taking hold of my hand, and deſiring I would not be offended at what he was going to ſay, he went on to the following purport.

"The diſtreſſes of my mind and the "anguiſh of my wound, rendering my "recovery extremely precarious, I have "preſumed, Miſs Beauclerk, to beg "your ear upon a ſubject, which, though "very near my heart, I would not, for "particular reaſons, enter upon, was "there a certainty either that medicine "or time could do me any eſſential be-"nefit. As it is therefore doubtful "how long I may be in a capacity of "delivering myſelf intelligibly, I have "determined to ſeize the preſent oppor-

"tunity

" tunity of opening my mind, ſince, was
" I to leave the world without telling
" you how dear you have always been to
" my ſoul, my parting moments would
" be imbittered with an anxiety that
" muſt render the natural gloomineſs of
" death inconceivably afflicting — O!
" Miſs Beauclerk, from the firſt mo-
" ment I beheld you, young as we both
" were, I loved you—Every day, as you
" roſe into perfection, I felt an encreaſe
" of paſſion, though I ſtrove to conceal
" my ſentiments very carefully from the
" world, as I ſaw but too many diffi-
" culties in the way of our union, had I
" even merit enough to ſolicit with a
" likelihood of ſucceſs. In ſhort, madam,
" I found my father's ambition was
" utterly unfavourable to my hopes
" —And I ſaw that you had too much
" dignity of diſpoſition to come into a
" family, that would look upon your
" alliance in a diſagreeable light; or

" ſhew a leſs regard to the invaluable
" requiſites of beauty and virtue, than
" to the infinitely meaner circumſtances
" of anceſtry and fortune. — Theſe,
" madam, were the motives of my
" ſilence; and ſilence, however mortify-
" ing in my ſituation, was, at leaſt, the
" moſt prudent part, if it was not the
" moſt generous. I have always looked
" with deteſtation on thoſe men, who,
" though they were conſcious of ſome
" family conſideration that muſt prevent
" them from accepting the honour of a
" lady's hand, were nevertheleſs inſolent
" enough, or cruel enough, to aim at
" engaging her affections—On theſe ac-
" counts, I ſay, madam, had I even
" reaſon to think you would have
" bleſt me with a reciprocal eſteem, I
" had avoided the preſumption, or the
" baſeneſs, of a declaration; ſince, as
" there was no proſpect of leading you
" into any certain ſtate of felicity, it

" would

"would be infamy itſelf to think of "plunging you into diſtreſs."

O! mama, what a mind has this man!—Here, however, he was obliged to reſt himſelf a little, while the only reply I could make was with my tears.

After a pauſe of ſome moments, he reſumed the affecting ſubject, and thus continued his diſcourſe—"I do not now, "my ever adorable Miſs Beauclerk, "meanly intend, by an addreſs to your "generoſity, to make any intereſt with "your heart—Your eſteem I ſhould be "proud of poſſeſſing; but thus hover-"ing, as I may ſay, on the verge of "eternity, I ſhould be ſorry, for your own "ſake, was I honoured with your love "—May that, madam, be reſerved for "ſome fortunate man, whoſe merits are "ſufficient to juſtify your choice, and "whoſe ſituation will not create any

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" to the wretched Louiſa. Talking, my " dear Miſs Beauclerk, I find becomes " inconvenient to me — Indulge me " therefore at once, and conſider, that " to be generous, upon ſome occaſions, " may be the higheſt inſtance of barba- " rity."

Whether I was right or wrong, my dear mama, you muſt determine; but, unable to reſiſt his ſolicitations any longer, I took the paper with a reluctant hand; and, in my confuſion, putting it into my boſom inſtead of my pocket, the colonel ſeemed tranſported at the action, kiſſed my hand a thouſand times, and declared he could now quit the world with content. All the time I was ſinking under a load of equal awkwardneſs and anxiety, till the ſurgeons happily coming in, gave me an opportunity of retiring, and unlading the fullneſs of my heart in a freſh ſhower of tears.

The

The good Mrs. Mildmay, knowing that I had been a conſiderable while in the colonel's apartment, came up to my room; and, finding my eyes extremely red, ſhe threw her kind arms round my neck, and calling me by the tendereſt appellations you can conceive, told me ſhe had been long ſenſible that her ſon was paſſionately in love with me; and that ſhe alſo had been long ſenſible, notwithſtanding my delicate reſerve, (ſo ſhe was pleaſed to ſay) that I conſidered him with an eye of affection — "But my "ſweet girl, my dear Harriot," continued ſhe, finding me diſtreſſed and aſtoniſhed at this information, "don't "imagine I have ſeen this mutual re- "gard with any other regret, but my "fear, that Mr. Mildmay would not be "propitious to the happineſs of his ſon: "for my own part, I am ſo convinced "of your worth, that the colonel has "an additional ſhare in my regard on

"account

" account of his attachment to you; and, " could I but prevail upon his father, " I ſhould ſtill have a daughter no leſs " dear in my eſtimation than the miſer- " able Louiſa—But, my love, this fa- " mily—pride ſo runs away with my " poor Mr. Mildmay's good ſenſe, that " I deſpair of making him ſacrifice " the ſuggeſtions of his vanity to the " ſentiments of his reaſon: his mind has " been always taken up with an idea of " making his children great; and, ſo he " could gain them an empty title, he " payed but little conſideration to what " might ſecure their felicity."

And thus, my dear mama, are matters at preſent ſituated; and thus, all the time that I have been ſuppoſing my affection for the colonel a ſecret, this excellent woman has ſeen into the moſt latent receſſes of my heart, and even kindly ſympathized with my anxiety.

You

You may be ſure, madam, that, after this exceſſive goodneſs had a little emboldened me, I made her acquainted with every circumſtance which paſſed with the colonel, though I ſcarcely knew how to mention the affair of the will, as I thought ſhe might fancy me on that account an enemy, though an involuntary one, to the intereſt of her family—But Mrs. Mildmay, madam, is a counterpart of yourſelf; ſhe has a ſoul incapable of liſtening to any little conſiderations, and obſerves the practice of generoſity too much in her own conduct not to love it in other people's—As I went on with my ſtory ſhe was gradually affected — her heart laboured — and her eye roſe in perfect uniſon to mine; and, upon the concluſion of my narrative, "Harriot," ſays ſhe, "the more I know "you, the more I wiſh you for my "daughter — My ſon has pleaſed me "exceedingly by his conduct on this

"occaſion;

" occaſion; and I think you would have
" acted rather below the dignity of your
" character, had you not condeſcended
" to oblige him; but, notwithſtanding
" the little likelihood of preſent appear-
" ances, I have yet a dawn of hope,
" which beams acroſs my boſom, and
" aſſures me you ſhall one day be happy
" with the colonel—Had the unfortunate
" Louiſa—But why do I afflict myſelf
" with recollecting a creature who now
" has really diſhonoured us—Her ſcan-
" dalous elopement, in the very moment
" of her ſeeming penitence, argues an
" uncommon turpitude of ſentiment;
" and ſhews that her firſt indiſcretion
" was not ſo much the conſequence of
" an extravagant tenderneſs for her
" lover, as the reſult of her natural de-
" pravity. God will, I hope, however,
" forgive the unhappy wretch her guilt,
" and mercifully incline to ſwell the

" enormity

"enormity of her crime, by putting "down her death to my account."

My unhappy Louisa!—You may be sure, my dear mama, I did what I possibly could to alleviate the distresses of the venerable Mrs. Mildmay, at the same time that I said every thing which could extenuate the seeming misbehaviour of my friend; the good old lady seemed willing to catch at any twig of probability which might keep her hopes entirely from sinking; but, alas! the fatal force of appearances rendering the very strongest quite unequal to the task, she changed the conversation, and asked me if I had any scruple to shew her the colonel's will—I replied, that I could have no scruple to shew her any thing, as I was sensible she could never have a desire that was not founded on the strictest propriety; and therefore immediately produced it from my bosom—

"My dear," ſays ſhe, "you are very "good; and yet be aſſured I ſhould not "make this requeſt on any account, "was I not convinced that you wiſh as "cordially as myſelf that the teſtator's "recovery may prevent the will from "being ever carried into execution."

Indeed, madam, (returned I)——— "Harriot," interrupted ſhe, "let minds "that doubt each other's candour break "out into profeſſions of regard, and "ſentimental exclamations; it is below "us, however, my love, to enter into a "vindication of our motives, ſince any "argument to prove them juſt would "be tacitly to acknowlege that it was "poſſible for them to be otherwiſe. We "will not, my deareſt girl, even wrong "the rectitude of our own principles "by implication; nor be the firſt to "deny ourſelves that merit which has "been hitherto granted us by every "body

"body elſe." — So ſaying, ſhe opened the will, which is very ſhort, containing little more than a general reaſon for the colonel's appointing me his heir; and leaving a miniature of himſelf ſet in diamonds to his mother; his horſes, arms, and watch, to his father; his library to Louiſa; a diamond ring to yourſelf; ſome trifling remembrances to other friends; and his cloaths and about two hundred pounds among the ſervants.

Short as the will was, my dear mama, I could ſcarcely ſtand the ſhock of reading it; there is ſomething ſo awful in a will, you know, even where one's ſelf is not concerned; but when it is made by a perſon for whom one entertains an eſteem; when a partiality is abſolutely ſhewn in one's own favour; and when there is another perſon by, who is infinitely more entitled to a preference; it

muſt be inexpreſſibly diſtreſſing to us if we are not wholly diveſted of ſentiment and delicacy. You cannot, therefore, imagine my confuſion, when I found the colonel had left me two thouſand pounds in money; the magnificent ſervice of plate, which had been his godfather, Harley's; and the Buckinghamſhire eſtate, which is ſeven hundred pounds a year, and which was formerly his great aunt Ingoldſby's. Mrs. Mildmay ſaw my anxiety, and kindly pitied it; reſtoring me the paper, and acknowleging ſhe had been to blame in ſuffering her curioſity to carry her ſo far—"But, my dear "Harriot," ſays ſhe, "a mother will "pay but little attention to decorum in "any thing which concerns the conduct "of her children." After this, we had a long converſation about the colonel, in which Mrs. Mildmay ſeemed ſo highly pleaſed with his behaviour to me, that I was ſomewhat re-aſſured, and had

had freſh opportunities of admiring the greatneſs of her generoſity. Notwithſtanding this, the circumſtances of the will rendered me exceſſive awkward, till we were flattered with ſome certain hopes of the colonel's recovery. From that moment I breathed a free-er air, and conſidered myſelf as leſs an interloper in the family; he is now, thank God, in a very fine way, and has borne the freſh ſhock of his ſiſter's abrupt departure, with a much greater ſhare of fortitude than could be expected.

And now, my dear mama, how do you do, and what do you ſay to the boldneſs of your girl, in thus preſuming to talk to you upon ſuch a point as the foregoing ſubject? Do you condemn her of temerity, or approve her for candour; do you imagine that ſhe has grown forward on your indulgence, or do you think that ſhe has made only a

proper uſe of your tenderneſs, and treated you with the openneſs which is doubly your due from the cloſeneſs of your relation, and the greatneſs of your indulgence? I wiſh I knew your ſentiments; for, as you have always ſtudied to anticipate every deſire of mine, I ſhould be a monſter indeed if I heſitated but an inſtant to comply with your inclinations. The whole family here, my dear mama, are impatient to ſee you—Mrs. Mildmay longs, ſhe ſays, to talk with you about the colonel, and you know who—the old gentleman repeatedly tells me, that the value of a friend is only to be experienced in the day of adverſity; and the colonel hopes that nothing at the Hall has given you any cauſe of diſguſt. Come to us then, dear madam, for your company is greatly wanted; and by none, you may believe, ſo much as your daughter: the colonel's tenderneſs oppreſſes me, the amiable

Louiſa's

Louiſa's fate diſtracts me, and Mrs. Mildmay's goodneſs is inſupportable. Come then, madam, to her reſcue; the arms of maternal affection are always fraught with peace; and, if they bring comfort in proportion to their benignity, who is ſo likely to receive the balm of conſolation as

Your ever dutiful
and affectionate Daughter

HAR. BEAUCLERK.

P.S. When I write to my dear mama I never know where to leave off—I ſhould have told you that Butler, a very ſenſible fellow, who is ſervant to the colonel, has been ſent away to London to make a minute enquiry at Mrs. Darnel's, in relation to Louiſa—God grant the honeſt man may ſucceed; for, if friendſhip is liable to be attended with ſuch anguiſh

as I feel upon this dear but unfortunate girl's account, I muſt, for the future, avoid every acquaintance with the moſt amiable part of my ſex, for fear of being plunged into continual calamities.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

VIENNA, *August* 2.

IT is in vain, my dear Melmoth, I find, for your unfortunate friend to continue any longer abroad: the change of country in no manner tends to alleviate the distresses of his bosom, nor erases in the least the form of that amiable wretch, that Miss Mildmay, from his recollection. If possible, she gives him every moment an additional pang; and, till he becomes utterly deprived both of memory and sense, he must feel the sharpest affliction on her account.

In reality, Charles, though it is now twelve months since the infamous flight of

of that unfortunate girl, I am rather more wretched than ever—She is continually preſent to my imagination; and I find, in ſpite of my pride and my reaſon, that ſhe holds an abſolute empire over my heart, and that I muſt actually ceaſe to live before I can actually ceaſe to love her. Don't deſpiſe me, however, my dear Melmoth—I bluſh for my own baſeneſs, in ſuffering the abandoned woman even to ſteal a ſingle inſtant upon my thoughts; but, alas! the more I would baniſh her, the more forcible ſhe returns; and I am diſtracted with a perpetual round of tenderneſs and ſhame; of pity and indignation: wherever I go I am torn with a variety of oppoſite paſſions; and, to uſe the language of poor Sciolto,

All within is anarchy and uproar."

How

How, Melmoth, when I received your firſt letter at Rotterdam, did my ſoul exult in the expectation of being completely happy with Louiſa! The moſt diſtant inſinuation of that delicacy which originally cauſed all our misfortunes, was then argued down into ſilence; and the univerſal joy which I thought would flow from a reconciliation, added to the tumultuous tide of tranſport that ſwelled about my heart from a ſtill more natural cauſe, gave me an abſolute foretaſte of elyſium. — But Providence thought proper, by an accident which I conſidered, at that time, as the greateſt of all calamities, to ſnatch me from the ſmiling deſtruction, and graciouſly counteracted the warmth of my wiſhes to preſerve me from everlaſting diſgrace —O! Melmoth, had I been married to her before this fortunate diſcovery of her infamy — think what would have been the conſequence!—To the remoteſt

confine

confine of the world I had purſued her; and, as Othello ſays,

Had all her hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had ſtomach for them all!

In fact, Charles, I ſhould have proceeded upon ſome immediate act of deſperation; and, perhaps, after I had ſacrificed her to the juſtice of my reſentment, it is more than probable I had been tempted to lay violent hands on myſelf.

You ſee, however, my dear friend, from the conduct of this unhappy wretch, how much reaſon I had for ſuppoſing that the woman who deviates from the rules of virtue with one man, will have very little ſcruple to indulge the licentious turn of her diſpoſition with another; you ſee what reaſon I had to ſet Louiſa's crime down to the account of genuine conſtitution, inſtead of attributing it to the weakneſs of an extravagant

extravagant love—But your women of ſtrong paſſions, Charles, are continually falling in love; every freſh object inſpires a freſh deſire; and when they have once conquered that exalted delicacy of ſentiment, which is the principal bulwark of their honour, they give an unbounded licenſe to enjoyment; and imagine that, ſince they have been familiar with one perſon, there can be no addition to their guilt by an equal familiarity with all. Thus, inſtead of an endeavour to recover the hallowed paths of innocence, they make a ſingle indiſcretion an excuſe for the commiſſion of a thouſand; and indulge every riſing guſt of inclination, by arguing themſelves into a belief that it cannot in the leaſt increaſe the infamy of their characters.

You pleaſed me extremely by your repeated accounts of colonel's Mildmay's perfect

perfect recovery. Poor fellow, he now ſees for what a worthleſs woman he ventured his life; and thoſe mad-headed puppies that are for reſenting the ruin of a ſiſter, impatient to be ruined, and one who places the principal of all felicities in her abſolute deſtruction, will, I hope, be warned by Louiſa's conduct, from hazarding their throats whenever a profligate huſſey thinks proper to throw away her reputation. Is it not, however, ſurprizing, that, in all this time, notwithſtanding the moſt diligent ſearch of the Mildmay houſe, no account whatſoever can be heard of their delicate daughter? But I ſuppoſe ſhe is in ſome ſecluded corner of the kingdom, wallowing in the ſtye of unbounded proſtitution, and even entertaining ſome underbred ſcoundrel of a keeper with the pangs which her infamous flight has thruſt into the boſom of her miſerable family—O! for ſome

quick

quick, ſome executing curſe to ſtrike the ſtrumpet and her paramour this moment to the center, though I was to follow them the next—Perhaps, Charles, ſhe is diverting him with a ludicrous repreſentation of your friend; and laughing with him this moment at my ſtupidity in once believing her a woman of virtue—Perhaps, my manner is mimicked to a circle of intoxicated fox-hunters; and, perhaps, a whole table of brutal country ſquires are at this very inſtant roaring at the ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity of my firſt declaration—O! that I was near her — that I could reach her proſtituted heart—By the great God of heaven it would give me more pleaſure to tear it from her boſom, than to receive the empire of the whole univerſe; and I am not ſure but I would forfeit my hopes of everlaſting ſalvation if I could but commit a piece-meal murder on her villain, and make him feel but

one

one half, one fiftieth part of that hell which his poſſeſſion of her has kindled in this breaſt, and which is at this moment furiouſly blazing for revenge.

Yet, Charles, what have I to do with this abandoned woman—what is her infamy to me?—I'll talk no more of her—I'll think no more of her—I'll ſtab her idea to the heart if it ever riſes again to my imagination — I'll —— Alas! my dear Melmoth, — I can talk of nothing elſe—I can think of nothing elſe; and baſe, polluted, proſtitute as ſhe is—I will not anſwer, but what ſhe might yet find it poſſible to argue me into an opinion of her innocence; and perſuade me, even againſt the ſenſe of my own conviction, into ſuch a belief of her purity as would induce me to forget every thing which is paſt, and urge me to ſnatch her again to my boſom, with all the paſſionate phrenzy of a deſperate love.

love—O! Melmoth, had you ever ſeen her — had you ever heard her talk — But I will drop the ſubject, I will ſpeak of ſomething elſe; and only obſerve that the greateſt of all curſes, is to doat upon the object of our utmoſt contempt; and to feel an invincible fondneſs in our hearts, for what our reaſon points out as an everlaſting mark of deteſtation.

I have by this poſt wrote to my ſiſter, and informed her of my intention to comply immediately with her wiſhes, and return home; Edwards has orders to prepare every thing for my departure, and in ſix weeks or a couple of months, I flatter myſelf with a hope of finding you in high ſpirits, and in good health. You, my dear Melmoth, and that exalted woman, lady Haverſham, ſhall have the direction of my future life—You are people upon whoſe friend-

ſhip I can ſafely rely, and notwithſtanding all the parade which is made about a knowledge of the world, I am not ſatisfied but what the integrity of our friends is much more eſſential to our welfare, than their knowledge of mankind—But a truce with philoſophical reflections.

What you tell me in relation to my ſiſter's refuſal of lord Winworth, does not at all ſurprize me—A woman of eight and twenty with a prodigious fortune, a fine perſon, and ſuch a mind as lady Haverſham's, cannot fail of having a number of admirers—But I am ſatisfied deſerving as thoſe admirers may be, ſhe will never think of changing her ſituation—I know Theodoſia poſſeſſes a delicacy of mind, perhaps, ſuperior to all the reſt of her ſex; and am ſenſible, however, ſhe may reſpect the matrimonial union, that ſhe is no friend

to

to ſecond marriages—She has in confidence repeatedly told me, that a heart which is deſerving of regard can admit but of one impreſſion; and that ſhe who can love a ſecond time is utterly unworthy of being ever loved at all—Her notions to ſome may appear a little romantic, but I dare ſay, Charles, they will never leſſen her in any body's eſtimation, whoſe eſteem can be neceſſary to her peace, or advantageous to her character—This I am ſure of at any rate, that they will excite your admiration as much as they have done that of

Your ever faithful

ROBERT HAROLD.

LETTER XIX.

Miſs LOUISA MILDMAY *to Miſs* HARRIOT BEAUCLERK.

Magdalen Houſe, Goodman's Fields.

AND have I at laſt the unſpeakable happineſs of writing once more to my dear Harriot, does ſhe ſtill acknowledge me for her friend; or does ſhe join in the general obloquy which the whole world muſt naturally throw upon a myſterious abſence of above eleven months, at a time too that the moſt criminal levity of conduct had baniſhed me from the protecting arms of parental affection, and caſt me out in the full face of the whole univerſe, as a diſgrace to my ſex, and a ſcandal to my family. O! Harriot, it will be no more than what I expect if you ſhould both

both deſpiſe and deteſt me—Yet when my ſtory, my melancholy ſtory comes to be related; when you find how baſely, how cruelly I have been betrayed; I know your tender heart will bleed at what I have ſuffered, and I know alſo that the generoſity of your diſpoſition will be ſenſibly affected if during a period in which I have been moſt entitled to your pity, I have been materially leſſened in your eſteem. To begin then at once, know that the ſpecious, the ſanctified Mrs. Darnel, who had ſuch obligations to our family, and in whoſe houſe I was to find ſo certain an aſylum, is a fiend of darkneſs, an inſtrument of hell, a prieſteſs of deſtruction.

For the firſt day or two of my reſidence at her houſe, after I was turned out from my father's, ſhe ſeemed ſo heartily touched with my misfortune, and ſo immediately intereſted in my

welfare, that abſtracted from the cloſeneſs of our relation, ſhe acquired a conſiderable ſhare of my eſteem, and I could not help conſidering her as a woman of unbounded good nature, who was kindly appointed by the pitying hand of Providence to mitigate the ſeverity of my affliction—Actuated by this opinion, I made her acquainted with my whole heart, and determined as ſhe had the character of being extremely ſenſible, and devout, to regulate my conduct entirely by her advice, till I ſhould be happily bleſt with the forgiveneſs of my father.

I had not, however, been at her houſe above three days, when ſhe began to alter her tone a little; inſtead of lamenting the unhappy ſtep I had taken, as ſhe did firſt, ſhe ſpoke of it with more and more indifference; and at laſt pretty plainly inſinuated, that I had erred

erred rather againſt the ſeverities of cuſtom, than the laws of morality—that the very beſt women in the kingdom had not always been able to preſerve themſelves unſullied; and that it was even idle to diſtreſs myſelf ſo much on account of a ſlip, which ſhe herſelf knew would not be in the leaſt prejudicial to my fortune. I muſt confeſs I was ſo aſtoniſhed to hear a woman, of whoſe delicacy in matters of reputation I entertained the higheſt opinion, ſo eaſily reconciled to an action I conſidered as criminal, as it was ſcandalous, and to be no leſs repugnant to the principles of virtue than the cuſtoms of ſociety. I therefore continued ſilent ſome moments, hoping that I had miſconceived her meaning, and expecting that ſhe would explain herſelf more to my ſatisfaction: but here I was totally diſappointed; for miſtaking my ſilence as a mark of my approbation, ſhe ventured

to be ſtill more explicit, and delivered herſelf to the following purpoſe, with an air half gay, half ſerious; yet carefully attending through the whole, to the various changes of my countenance.

" Indeed, my dear Miſs Mildmay, to " be candid with you, I cannot imagine " however widely I differ from the ſen- " timents of the righteous over much; " that the indulgence of the paſſions is " any way repugnant to the laws of " morality—I ſhall grant that the indul- " gence of them in a manner conforma- " ble to the practice of one's country is " the moſt eligible mode; but where " people are not married, human nature, " as the poet ſays, will be human nature; " and a caſual lapſe from the rigid rules " of form muſt be ſometimes expected. " Come my dear," continued the unblushing creature, " taking hold of my " hand, that Harold is a villain, but if

" you

"you will be governed by me, your little "affair with him ſhall by no means de- "prive you of a good huſband. You "recollect your old admirer Sir Harry "Haſtings, Sir Harry paſſionately loves "you, and has followed you up to town, "to make another tendre of a heart, "which has long been devoted to your "ſervice; he is my intimate acquaint- "ance, and has in fact requeſted my "aſſiſtance, and if you have no objection "ſhall drink tea with us this evening."

You cannot imagine, my dear Harriot, what indignation I felt during the whole time of this delicate harangue; yet willing to diſcover her utmoſt deſigns, I endeavoured to bridle my impatience till ſhe had finiſhed it. When ſhe concluded, I ſtrove to aſſume as unembarraſſed a tone of voice as I was able, and fixing my eyes with an unremitting attention upon her's, I think

Alarmed at a reply, which I dare ſay from my ſilence at firſt, ſhe no way expected, Mrs. Darnel ſeemed greatly ſurprized that I ſhould put ſo unaccountable a conſtruction upon her words; if ſhe ſeemed to ſpeak ſlightly, ſhe ſaid, of a deviation from the ſpotleſs path's of innocence, it was on purpoſe to reſtore me to ſome degree of temper with myſelf; and if ſhe had recommended Sir Harry Haſtings to my conſideration, it was entirely from a ſolicitude for my welfare, that deſerved a very different return from ſuch a ſeverity of animadverſion as I had been pleaſed to diſtinguiſh it with; Sir Harry was a man of good family and large fortune; unexceptionable in his perſon, and for aught ſhe had ever heard to the contrary unexceptionable alſo in his manners. On theſe accounts ſhe did not think him unworthy of my notice; however, ſince I was ſo averſe to an interview with him,

ſhe

ſhe would take care he ſhould never viſit at her houſe ſo long as I continued to honour her with my company; and that for the future I might be ſatisfied ſhe would not drop a ſingle ſyllable which was capable of giving me the leaſt offence—Adding, that from the unremitting rectitude of her paſt life there could be no room to ſuppoſe ſhe would now become an advocate for diſhonour; or betray the cauſe of that virtue in the decline of her days, which in the giddieſt part of her youth ſhe had always regarded as the principal beauty of the female character.

We are all of us, my dear Harriot, ready enough to believe, what we wiſh may be true; and Mrs. Darnel defended herſelf with ſuch an appearance of integrity that I was grieved for the tartneſs of my reply, and begged ſhe would excuſe it on account of the diſtraction

ſtraction with which my mind muſt at that time be naturally torn. I then let her into a few paſſages of Sir Harry's character, particularly his ruining the two Miſs Nettervilles; his inſolent attempt to run away with myſelf, for which you know my poor brother would have called him to a ſevere account had not Mr. Townſhend put them both under an arreſt; and mentioned ſome inſtances of his tyranny to inferiors, that had rendered him either contemptible or deteſted through all the country. Mrs. Darnel affected great ſurprize at theſe accounts, declaring ſhe had never heard of any thing but his attempt to run away with me which could be mentioned to his prejudice—"Even of that," ſays ſhe, "I heard but vaguely, I however "ſet it down as a proof of that paſſion "for you, which he ſtill continues to ex- "preſs with the greateſt vehemence, "and which before I heard your ſenti-

"ments,

" ments, I did not know but the family " might be induced to overlook."

Matters continued entirely to my mind at Mrs. Darnel's, till lady Haverſham took her leave of me, and went down on the ſcheme of reconciliation to the Hall. Mrs. Darnel then began to hint ſomething of a concern for Sir Harry, and inſinuated, though diſtantly, a fear, leſt the amiable counteſs ſhould prevail in her brother's favour; and leſt after all I ſhould be doomed to the arms of a man who was entitled to nothing but my eternal deteſtation — I again appeared extremly diſſatisfied, ſhe however, apologized, and we were again reconciled; but the night after, Harriot—the night after — Does not your heart ach with the ſtrongeſt apprehenſions for your poor Louiſa?—I know it does — and I even anticipate at this paſſage the

the diſtreſs which I am ſenſible you muſt feel upon my account.

Next morning after breakfaſt Mrs. Darnel told me ſhe was in a great dilemma with regard to an engagement, which ſhe had annually at Sir William Nicholſon's in the next ſtreet; "You "muſt know my dear," ſays ſhe, "Sir "William and his lady always celebrate "the anniverſary of their marriage, and "for twenty years I have never been "abſent on that occaſion—Now I would "not for the world leave you alone—and "yet I don't know how to get excuſed if "I ſtay away from Sir William's, this is "the day, and there is to be a prodigious "croud of company there in the even-"ing." My dear Mrs. Darnel, return-ed I, you quite diſtreſs me with your civility—You muſt on no condition ſtay from your friends, for I ſhall be quite miſerable if I think I interfere in the leaſt

leaſt with your engagements; I inſiſt therefore abſolutely on your going—and —" Well, well," interrupted ſhe, " ſince " you are ſo good I'll go,—but depend " upon it I ſhall be at home by eleven " in the evening." The ſtating of an hour for her return occaſioned a freſh diſpute; but at laſt ſhe ſet out, ordering a chariot, which ſhe had kindly ſet up on my account the day or two before, notwithſtanding the ſlenderneſs of her fortune, to come at twelve.

As I was no way inclined to ſleep I ſat up in the back parlour, reading Clariſſa Harlowe; and had juſt got into that paſſage where the vile Lovelace attempts the ſanctity of her chamber at midnight, in the houſe of that deteſtable monſter Sinclair. I don't know how it was, but I felt an inſtinctive kind of terror, when I came to this place—I could not go on with the ſtory,

and began to reflect, that, if any body was to break into our houſe I ſhould be in a very dangerous ſituation—It was now almoſt one o'clock, and not a ſingle ſoul at home beſides myſelf, and the cook; my Sally, and Mrs. Darnel's women had received leave to be at a dance with ſome ſervants in the neighbourhood; and the men were attending the chariot at Sir William Nicholſon's to bring home their miſtreſs—The time; the place; a remote ſtreet, bordering on the fields of Marybone; and, above all, the ſubject which I had been juſt reading, ſerved to fill me with the ſtrongeſt apprehenſions; and I was going more than once to call the cook to ſit with me; but that I was fearful the poor woman might be in a doze, from exceſſive fatigue, as ſhe was houſe-maid alſo, and therefore conſidered it cruel to diſturb her—At laſt I heard ſomebody unlock the ſtreet door on the outſide; and naturally

turally ſuppoſing it to be my Sally, and Mrs. Darnel's woman, who had now returned from their evening's entertainment, I rang the bell; when who ſhould enter the room, to my inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment, but the villain Haſtings, wrapped up in a large ſurtout, and carrying a dark lanthorn in his hand, which gleamed an inconceivable horror round the whole apartment — I ſcreamed out, you may naturally imagine, at the ſight of ſo unexpected and ſuſpicious a viſitor; and called the cook as loud as I could to come up ſtairs inſtantly, at the ſame time ringing the bell with the greateſt violence; but whether ſhe was too faſt a-ſleep to hear me, or whether ſhe was privy to the deſigns of her infamous miſtreſs, I know not; this only I know, that ſhe never once made her appearance, and that I was left entirely to the brutality of a wretch whom I

knew to be equally deſtitute of ſhame and of humanity.

Finding myſelf thus barbarouſly betrayed, I aſſumed what ſpirits I could, and aſked the midnight ruffian by what authority he had dared to break into my chamber at ſuch an hour, in ſuch a diſguiſe; and threatened him with the utmoſt reſentment, not only of the laws, but my family. He had now laid down his lanthorn, and unbuttoned his ſurtout; and was ſtriving, by all the affectation of the deepeſt reſpect, to ſilence my exclamations; declaring that the happineſs of his whole life depended upon me, and that nothing but the dictates of a deſperate love could poſſibly urge him to break in thus violently on my repoſe—"Conſider, ever beautiful Miſs Mild-"may," cried the monſter on his knee, "conſider how long and how paſſionate-

"ly

"ly I have loved you — Recollect alſo, "madam, that you are now thrown out "by the inhumanity of a relentleſs "father, and the perfidy of a profligate "villain, upon an inhoſpitable world, "which, ſo far from commiſerating your "ſituation, will even feaſt its malevo-"lence with your diſtreſs — To guard "you from the ruin which muſt inevi-"tably burſt upon your head in theſe "melancholy circumſtances, behold theſe "faithful arms — My fortune and my "ſoul are your's if you condeſcend to "accept of them; and I ſhall think "myſelf eternally obliged, if the ſoli-"citude which I manifeſt for your feli-"city may be able to influence the na-"tural generoſity of your temper to "prevent the everlaſting deſtruction of "mine."

As he pronounced this ridiculous ſpeech with every ſeeming appearance

of ſincerity, I ſuppreſſed the indignation which I ſhould have otherwiſe diſcovered at his preſumption in joining my father's name to ſo opprobrious an epithet, in hopes that I ſhould be able to turn his own arts upon him, and draw ſome advantages from all this affectation of generoſity and affection—I therefore told him, that he had taken an odd way to teſtify his regard for me, by breaking thus at midnight into my apartment; and that the myſterious manner of his intruſion looked as if he came with ſome intentions which were totally different from the ends of this paſſionate proteſtation—On which account I begged he would immediately retire; and hinted, that, if he ſtill continued his ſentiments in my favour, he need not deſpair of being heard to his ſatisfaction in the morning.

" A thou-

"A thouſand thanks, my angel" returned the wretch, kiſſing my hand with a wildneſs of vehemence "for this condeſcending goodneſs —Yet why, my adorable Miſs Mildmay, if I am to receive any marks of your benignity in the morning, need you now ſcruple to bleſs me with ſome little, ſome diſtant token of your approbation? —Where a man doats to diſtraction, like me, an hour's delay is a whole eternity of torture—Shorten, therefore, the time, I beſeech you, madam; and encreaſe the greatneſs of the obligation, by a generous alacrity in beſtowing it."

He was going on in this manner, my dear Harriot, and even proceeding to kiſs my cheek, when, ſummoning all the fortitude of my ſoul, I ſeized him by the breaſt, and threw the wretch from me above half the length of the room—

"Deſpicable villain," cried I at the ſame time, "unhand me; or, by the "holy hoſt of heaven, this moment is "your laſt." I was really frantic, Harriot—I ſaw myſelf betrayed, and had ſeized a penknife that lay accidentally open on the reading table, abſolutely determined to put my threats in execution if he preſumed to affront me with another approach — Finding me ſo greatly enraged he ſeemed totally at a loſs how to behave, and for ſome moments ſtood muſing in a ſtate of mingled ſurprize and irreſolution.

Perceiving him thus embarraſſed at my behaviour, I determined immediately to alarm the neighbourhood; and, with that view, ſnatched up one of the candles, thinking, before he recovered from his conſternation, to reach the ſtreet-door; but the cautious villain was too well prepared; he had five other

ruffians

ruffians planted in the fore-parlour, who were to ſeize me in caſe I attempted any thing of this kind; and to carry me through a little garden at the back of the houſe, into a lane that led to the fields; there it ſeems a coach was in waiting to hurry me off; and the ſcheme was ſo ſettled, that two of theſe five ſhould ride withinſide the vehicle, to prevent my ſcreaming; while the three others were to be poſted armed without, for fear, after all their precautions, I might find ſome opportunity of calling for aſſiſtance, and excite the humanity of any accidental paſſengers to an attack.

You cannot conceive, my dear Harriot, when I quitted the room, and found Sir Harry no way inclined to follow me; how my heart throbbed with the expectation of counteracting all

all Mrs. Darnel's barbarous machinations; and the hope of being able to engage the compaſſion of ſome charitable neighbour for my protection till day-light; but when the other wretches ruſhed out of the ſtreet-parlour, and barred my paſſage to the door, I was next to abſolutely diſtracted—I ſcreamed with a violence that almoſt tore my head to pieces; and, loſing all my reſolution at once, I fell upon my knees, crying out, "Spare me, dear gentlemen, "ſpare me — I am a poor unfortunate "creature, caſt out from my family "and friends—and I conjure you, by "the tender mercies of the living God, "not to aſſiſt the infamous purpoſes of "that monſter Sir Harry Haſtings."

"Madam," replied one of the fellows, whoſe appearance was ſuperior to the reſt, "Sir Harry is a fine gentle-

"man,

"man, has long loved you—and means "you nothing but what is ſtrictly ho- "nourable; remove your apprehenſions "therefore."—

"O! Sir," interrupted I, "whence this "violence, if he means nothing but what "is honourable? Why am I, at ſuch an "hour as this, beſet in my own lodgings, "and treated with all the illiberal free- "doms of a brothel-like audacity? If "you are gentlemen, you will ſurely "ſnatch a poor unhappy young creature "from deſtruction, who has never done "any human being the leaſt injury: or, "if you are men whoſe neceſſities have "obliged you to undertake an office "repugnant to the natural goodneſs of "your hearts, you muſt ſurely perform "a virtuous action for reward with as "much readineſs as you can conſent to "the perpetration of a monſtrous crime.

"—Here

" —Hear me then, dear gentlemen, I " beſeech you; conduct me but to lady " Haverſham's, in Groſvenor Square— " Lodge me but ſafely in the next houſe; " and I ſolemnly proteſt, before God, " that, let the wretch who has employed " you for this barbarous purpoſe pro- " miſe what he will, you ſhall receive " double that ſum, and a thouſand " thanks into the bargain, for conſult- " ing your own ſafety, and diſappoint- " ing his infamous deſigns."

I would have expoſtulated farther with the ſavages, my dear Harriot, but the vile Sir Harry now made his appearance; and aſked on what account they delayed the execution of their plan; endeavouring to raiſe me from the ground at the ſame time, and ordering the reſt to aſſiſt in carrying me to the coach— It was in vain I ſtruggled—in vain I

ſhrieked

ſhrieked for help— the monſters obeyed his commands with the moſt implicit readineſs; and my ſpirits were at laſt ſo exhauſted by the ſharpneſs of my terror, and the fatigue of my reſiſtance, that I ſunk lifeleſs on the floor.—In this ſtate they eaſily carried me to the coach; and it was ten o'clock next, or, more properly ſpeaking, that morning, before I recovered my ſenſes ſufficiently to recollect any one circumſtance of the whole tranſaction.

About ten o'clock, however, I came a little to myſelf, and found that I was in a very handſome bed, that the room was extremely well furniſhed, and that there were two female attendants with hartſhorn, and a number of other reſtoratives, ready to adminiſter every aſſiſtance which might be neceſſary for my recovery. From theſe women, who were

were Sir Harry's houſe-keeper and her daughter, I learned that I was brought to this houſe about four o'clock in the morning; that ſeveral times on the road Sir Harry and his companions were in violent apprehenſions for my life; that the moment they arrived I was conſigned over to the care of the women; and that, till within the laſt two hours, I had been in the ſtrongeſt hyſterics imaginable. The houſekeeper added, that ſhe was ſure her maſter muſt love me with the ſincereſt affection, for he had been like a diſtracted man on my account; and had repeatedly ſworn to lay violent hands on himſelf, if my indiſpoſition ſhould be productive of any fatal conſequences. As the women ſeemed to be not only communicative but good-natured, weak as I was, I made them acquainted with their maſter's conduct, told them my name and family, and offered to reward them above their utmoſt

expectations

expectations if they could, by any fortunate contrivance, facilitate my escape.—To this they replied, that they should be very willing to oblige me; but that their lives would not be safe if they acted in the least contrary to the will of their master--The youngest, particularly, thought it surprizing that I should wish to quit so fine a gentleman as Sir Harry, who had so great an estate, and who was ready, she was sure, to marry me the moment I thought proper to give my consent. From this, and some other expressions which dropped from the daughter, I found that she herself was in love with the wretch; and consequently thought it wonderful how any body else could mention him with the smallest indication either of aversion or contempt.

Disappointed in my hopes of escaping by means of the women, and finding them entirely at the devotion of their

their profligate maſter, I deſired they would help me up, not knowing how ſoon they might leave me to the monſter's brutality. They complied, but reluctantly; obſerving, that, after what I had undergone, reſt was abſolutely neceſſary for me; and declaring that they were certain I muſt be greatly indiſpoſed. Indeed, Harriot, they ſaid true; I was extremely ill; and, could I have removed my apprehenſions of Sir Harry, I ſhould have followed their advice with the utmoſt ſatisfaction. When they had dreſſed me, or, more properly ſpeaking, when they reſtored my dreſs to a little order, they led me into the dining-room, and prevailed upon me to ſwallow two diſhes of tea, and a diſh of chocolate: after this they withdrew; but the daughter returned in a few minutes after, to tell me that Sir Harry was coming to attend me; and the meſſage was ſcarcely delivered before the horrid

fellow

fellow actually entered with an air of forced complaiſance, very viſibly mixed with ſome degree of confuſion, and a great deal of malignity.

I was ſitting in a great chair when he entered; and, thinking it beſt to betray as little fear as poſſible, I fixed my eyes upon him with an intenſeneſs of determined indignation; and aſked him how long I was to remain a priſoner in his houſe? To which he replied, till I wanted an inclination to quit it.—"But, "madam," ſays he, ſeating himſelf on the oppoſite ſide of the fire-place, "I am "now come to have a little ſerious con-"verſation with you; and, as the nature "of this converſation will be of the laſt "importance to your own happineſs, "I hope, upon that account, you will "favour me with your attention.—From "the cloſeneſs of our neighbourhood in "the country, my dear Miſs Mildmay,

" it is impoſſible but what ſome parti-
" culars of my conduct muſt have
" reached your family that were no
" way advantageous to my character—
" Yet from the ſame cloſeneſs of neigh-
" bourhood, you yourſelf muſt have
" heard that I declined all alliance with
" many young ladies of diſtinction,
" merely on account of my attachment
" for you; declaring that ſo long as
" you continued ſingle, I never ſhould
" think of any other woman — You
" alſo know, madam, that when you
" thought proper to reject my addreſſes,
" your whole houſe allowed my pro-
" poſal to be extremely diſintereſted;
" and acknowledged that I did not want
" for love, however I might be deficient
" in deſert. That love, madam, in-
" ſtead of being extinguiſhed by re-
" pulſe, has, on the contrary, acquired
" additional force from oppoſition; and
" has driven me upon expedients in

" which

" which I have acquired nothing but " diſgrace — It has forced me to the " meanneſs of keeping ſpies continually " about your perſon; and your very " woman, Sally, in whom you ſo con- " fidently truſted—nay, madam, don't " ſtart—is nothing better than one of " my inſtruments.

" As long however as you remained " abſolutely diſengaged, I bore my own " rejection, and even the ſhame which " reſulted from my unſucceſsful attempt " to carry you off before, with ſome " tollerable ſhare of temper; but the " moment that curſed Harold was de- " clared the happy man, I determined, " let the conſequence be what it would, " to prevent the celebration of your " union; and had not a rupture happen- " ed otherwiſe between you, I was re- " ſolved you never ſhould be his, tho' " I even got him piſtoll'd on his way

" to the church—When you were ſent
" up to town I followed you inſtantly;
" and eſtabliſhed my intereſt ſo effectu-
" ally with Mrs. Darnel, that ſhe con-
" ſented to my carrying you off from
" her houſe if there was no likelihood
" of my ſucceeding by any other means
" —There was no likelihood; on the
" contrary, lady Haverſham ſet off to
" bring about a reconciliation between
" her family and your's; and the thing
" may be concluded done, for every
" body knows that woman is irreſiſta-
" ble.

" Such, madam, is the hiſtory of
" your preſent captivity—Now to what
" muſt follow—After having gone theſe
" lengths to get you into my poſſeſſion,
" it cannot be ſuppoſed that the power
" of man will ever prevail upon me to
" give you up—Nor, indeed, is it likely
" that any body will be able to diſcover

" you,

"you, ſince Mrs. Darnel's own intereſt,
"as well as her reputation, muſt oblige
"her to account for your abſence in a
"manner widely different from the truth.
"—For theſe reaſons, therefore, madam,
"I leave it to the determination of your
"own good ſenſe, whether it will not
"be much better for you to think of
"uniting chearfully with me; than
"urge me to the diſagreeable neceſſity
"of exerting a power, which, however
"unjuſtly it may be obtained, neverthe-
"leſs places your deſtiny entirely in my
"hands—Believe me, Miſs Mildmay,
"I love you with the moſt paſſionate
"extravagance, yet with the niceſt ſen-
"timent of honour—If I did not in-
"tend honourably, what could prevent
"me, in a houſe where my will is as
"abſolute as fate, from gratifying my
"inclination in any manner I might
"wiſh?—But, I don't know how it is—
"culpable as I may have been with

"regard to others, there is something "about you which always excited my "deepeſt veneration; and awes me at this "inſtant, when I am in poſſeſſion of your "perſon, from entertaining any inten- "tion injurious to your character — I "have talked a great deal, and ſhall "now acquaint you with my final de- "termination in a few words. From "the purity of my views, madam, and "the impoſſibility of your ever eſcap- "ing from this houſe, I am in hopes "that your generoſity and your good- "neſs will induce you to accept of the "offer which I again repeat of my hand "and fortune. Make a merit, therefore, "madam, of neceſſity; and conſent to "my propoſitions with a good grace— "for be aſſured your refuſal ſhall ex- "cuſe you nothing, as I have a clergy- "man already in the houſe, who is not "to be terrified from his duty by "ſcreams, and will perform the neceſ-

"ſary

" ſary ceremony, were you even ſtrug-
" gling in the pangs of death, and he
" himſelf to be deſtined the next mo-
" ment to inevitable deſtruction."

Inhuman, barbarous, remorſeleſs villain! —O! Harriot, don't you wonder at my patience in liſtening ſo tamely to ſo long and ſo audacious an addreſs? But, indeed, my dear, the odious man terrified me to the laſt degree by the exceſs of his confidence; and, in proportion as it was proper for me to interrupt him, I found myſelf leſs and leſs able to break in upon his horrid harangue—But a motion which he made to ſeize my hand rouſed me inſtantly to an exertion of my ſpirits; and, ſpurning him from me with all the diſdain I could poſſibly aſſume, yet ſtill poſſeſſing my recollection, I ſpoke to him in the following manner: " —Hear me, Haſtings — Execrable " monſter hear me —Nor imagine, be-

" cauſe I have been infamouſly betray-
" ed into your power, that any thing
" can fright away my reluctance to your
" perſon, or my hatred of your heart—
" Know then, that, ſhould inſtant death
" be the conſequence of my refuſal,
" no force on earth ſhall ever make me
" yours—I always deſpiſed, I always
" deteſted you—and this laſt outrage or
" which you have been guilty, gives
" ſuch an everlaſting edge to my aver-
" ſion, that, I if retain in the next world
" any ſenſe of what has paſſed in this, I
" ſhall ſtill conſider you through all
" eternity with the ſame unremitting
" contempt, and the ſame unremitting
" deteſtation — What, Sir, do you
" ſuppoſe that the more reaſon I have
" for my abhorrence, the more I ſhould
" relax in my reſentments; or think
" that, if your addreſſes were repulſed
" when I thought you infinitely leſs
" atrocious, there is a poſſibility of ſuc-

" ceeding

" ceeding now, when you are covered with
" aggravated crimes? No, Haſtings, no
" —The very ſuppoſition of ſuch a cir-
" cumſtance is a freſh argument of your
" unworthineſs, and only ſerves to render
" you additionally odious to my imagi-
" nation—Free me, therefore, from this
" infamous houſe, I deſire you—Free
" me inſtantly from this houſe—for, by
" the mighty God of heaven, the hour
" that makes me your's puts an end to
" my life, and may poſſibly endanger
" the ſafety of your own."

" Upon my word, madam," replied the inſulting wretch—" this tone of
" voice is perfectly tragical; you really
" talk this admirably—and, if your fa-
" vourite Harold was not to the full as
" great a profligate as myſelf, I ſhould
" think it impoſſible for you to over-
" look the ſmalleſt deviation from the
" paths of virtue—But I appeal to the
" rectitude

"rectitude of your judgment against
"the prepoſſeſſion of your heart—and,
"ſince you force me to put the queſtion,
"let me aſk you, which is moſt entitled
"to your regard, the man who has not
"only ruined, but forſaken you; or the
"man, who, with all the obloquy of
"that ruin upon your head, is willing
"to take you to his arms, and is ready
"even to think himſelf happy in a par-
"ticipation with your diſgrace?"

O! Harriot, don't you pity me, don't you bleed for me here?—Stained and polluted as I was, how could I reply to the equity of this reproach?—I felt it, as Hamlet ſays, *in my heart's core—in my heart of heart's*—and the propriety of it ſtruck me inſtantly dumb—O! how mean, how deſpicable is guilt, when it is even incapable to retort an inſult from the unworthy, and ſhrinks before the judgement ſeat of vice with as great a

degree

degree of timidity as if it was immediately arraigned before the awful tribunal of virtue!—That Harold too—but ſave me, Harriot—I muſt not ſuffer myſelf to think—of that—I cannot find an epithet to diſtinguiſh him by—my reaſon is impatient to brand him with the moſt deteſtable—but this infatuated boſom eternally beats in his behalf, and, though I ſtrive to deſpiſe and abhor him, yet I feel I paſſionately love.

As I continued in a ſtate of ſilent confuſion at this unanſwerable retort of Sir Harry's, the wretch rang the bell with a determined air, and, the houſekeeper entering to know his commands —"Mrs. Lawſon," ſays he, "deſire "the gentlemen in the parlour to walk "up." The woman withdrew, and, before I could recollect myſelf ſufficiently to aſk him for what purpoſe they were to walk up, three of the fellows who

who had been concerned in carrying me off the night before, attended by a moſt bold looking man, in a clergyman's habit, were in the room. This was a ſight which I was utterly unable to withſtand; my brain was inſtantly on fire; I ſcreamed with a wildneſs of diſtraction; and, juſt as the clergyman was coming up to me, I ſunk down lifeleſs on the floor. What became of me for ſix whole weeks I know not — Mrs. Lawſon tells me, that I was in ſuch ſtrong hyſterics, after the preſence of the men had terrified me into a ſwoon, that they were under a neceſſity of giving over their purpoſe for that time; and that it was with the greateſt difficulty ſhe, her daughter, and two of the houſemaids, could remove me to my room. Here it ſeems the violent agitation of mind, and the exceſſive fatigue which I had undergone, threw me into a fortunate fever, which deprived me of my

ſenſes;

ſenſes; and, though the monſter Haſtings omitted nothing which could poſſibly tend to my recovery, yet it was full ſix weeks before I was brought to my recollection. About this time, the natural goodneſs of my conſtitution triumphing over the fury of my diſorder, I became ſomewhat ſenſible, and was called back to the pungent reflections of a ſenſibility, which made me look with an inconceivable envy upon madneſs.

During the dangerous part of my illneſs, Mrs. Lawſon informed me, that her wretch of a maſter was abſolutely frantic; that he frequently tore his hair, and ſtamped upon the ground with all the agitation of a bedlamite, ſwearing he would not ſurvive me if I happened to die; and raving that the grave ſhould at leaſt unite him to me, ſhould there be no poſſibility of a union with me by any other means. Though nothing was ever

ever more odious to me than the thoughts of this fellow's paſſion, yet it was very fortunate that he loved me to ſo prepoſterous an exceſs—for his brutal companions, before I fell dangerous ill, being no ſtrangers to the crime of your unhappy friend, were continually ridiculing his intention of marrying a creature who had already parted with her honour; and were as often adviſing him to profit by the opportunity which Mrs. Darnel had put ſo luckily in his hands—They aſſured him, that a woman who had been familiar with one man, would make no mighty ſcruple to be familiar with a ſecond—they mentioned my hatred of him as the greateſt of all affectations; and inſiſted that nothing could be ſo contemptible as his ſtooping to accept of a woman for his wife whom another had already poſſeſſed as his miſtreſs. Theſe arguments Mrs. Lawſon hinted would wind him up ſometimes

times to a downright determination of proceeding to the moſt abſolute violations—he ſeemed fearful of being deſpiſed by his friends — and frequently talked of purſuing their advice—but, in the midſt of all his reſolutions, the deſire which he had to make me his irrevocably, and the dread he was under leſt I ſhould commit ſome inſtant act of deſperation on myſelf if he went to ſuch ſhocking extremities, prevented him from executing his horrid deſign; ſo that when he found I was really in danger, every thought of an illicit nature was immediately ſacrificed to his concern for my recovery — By this means, my dear Harriot, I very happily eſcaped every actual diſhonour; and, tho' his deteſtable paſſion was the ſource of ſuch exquiſite diſtreſs, ſtill it was that very paſſion which was the ultimate cauſe of my preſervation.

I will

I will not, my dear Harriot, treſpaſs on your patience by a minute detail of all I ſuffered in this odious houſe during a period of ſeven months—Suffice it, that I was ſcarcely recovered from my firſt fit of illneſs, but a freſh attempt to force me into a marriage brought on a relapſe, which ſaved me from a world of the moſt inſupportable perſecution, and changed the deteſtable importunities of Haſtings into a freſh concern for my life—This ſecond interpoſition of Providence, for I conſider it as ſuch in my favour, laſted three months—and the wretch was ſo miſerable at that time on my account, that he expreſſed a reſolution of uſing no means but humility and confinement to work upon my temper for the future—In about three months time I was again tollerably recovered, and beginning again to dread ſome lawleſs attempt from Sir Harry, when one of theſe common, yet unexpected acci-

dents,

dents, which are ſometimes productive of events which cannot be brought about by the utmoſt exertion of human wiſdom, ſet me free from captivity, and opened a new ſcene in my hiſtory, perhaps not leſs extraordinary than any of the former paſſages.

Sir Harry, and ſome of his fellow-libertines, had been making merry below ſtairs, one day, (for I ſhould have told you, that, during the whole time of my impriſonment, I never once eat a morſel out of thoſe rooms which were particularly ſet apart for my uſe) and ſat up, according to cuſtom, ſo extremely late, that none of them retired ſober to their rooms. — I myſelf heard ſome of them very noiſy on the ſtairs when they broke up, and therefore could give a probable gueſs at their ſituations. — I don't know what was the matter with me, but that night I would not pull off my cloaths, and only threw

myſelf acroſs the bed, to indulge myſelf in one of thoſe melancholly reveries which are generally pleaſing to the unfortunate:—between three and four, however, I grew a little heavy, and had juſt began to doze, when Mrs. Lawſon and her daughter, who always lay in an adjoining bed in the ſame room, as well to prevent me from any poſſibility of eſcaping, as to take care that my apartments were not approached by any of her maſter's friends, gave a violent ſhriek, and, jumping out of bed with the utmoſt precipitation, exclaimed, that the houſe was in flames. It was now about the beginning of October, and wanted a conſiderable while to day. I ſtarted up, and found the matter juſt as they repreſented it, the fire blazing fiercely through the windows; and the ſervants, who were by this time alarmed, were ſome of them unlocking the ſtreet door, and unbolting the parlour windows, while others

others were buſied in aſſiſting their intoxicated maſters out of bed.——This was an opportunity, my dear Harriot, not to be neglected: already dreſſed, I took advantage of the general confuſion, and, ſlipping out in nothing but a black ſilk night-gown, while every body's attention was employed on ſomething elſe, I gained the road, dark as it was, and trudged on without knowing, or indeed caring, which way I went, ſo I could but get far enough from that deteſted Haſtings.——The only apprehenſion I laboured under, was that of being purſued and overtaken by ſome of the wretch's emiſſaries, the moment he became acquainted with my flight. But, as if Providence was particularly determined to reſcue me from his hands, I was overtaken by a miniſtring angel, in the humble ſhape of a gardener's wife, who was ſinging with all the chearfulneſs of a benevolent mind, and going with a cart-load of vegetables to one of the London

markets.——I addreſſed myſelf to her at once, told her that I was an unfortunate young woman, who had been carried off from my friends by force about ſeven months before; and that the villain's houſe, who had taken me away, being that moment on fire, I had ſeized the opportunity, and made my eſcape; I therefore begged her protection, and aſſured her I would make it worth her while, if ſhe would be kind enough to take me along with her, as I was fearful of being purſued, and carried back. The good woman, who had ordered a boy that drove the horſes to ſtop the moment I ſpoke to her, replied, that whoever I was, I appeared to be in diſtreſs, and that, ſhe ſaid, was a ſufficient claim to her aſſiſtance at any time. So ſaying, ſhe let down a little ladder from the cart, and deſiring the boy to help me up, I was ſeated by herſelf in an inſtant. As ſhe had a lanthorn by her in the vehicle, ſhe could now have a tolerable

derable idea of my perſon; and, after looking at me for a minute or ſo, in the leaſt offenſive manner ſhe could aſſume, ſhe ſtood up, and taking off a warm joſeph, in which ſhe was buttoned up herſelf, "Come, madam," ſaid ſhe, "this "is a cold morning; you don't ſeem much "acquainted with this way of travelling; "therefore let me help you on with this "coat. Indeed you muſt have it," (perceiving I made a motion to decline being obliged at her expence) "and you muſt "let me tie this handkerchief about your "head too.—Poor ſoul! how you trem-"ble—but have a ſtout heart—I'll be "ſworn, from your looks, that you are a "good creature; and, depend upon it, "you ſhan't want for a friend, while my "name is Deborah Dobſon."

O Harriot, how was I charm'd with the uncultivated benignity of this worthy ruſtic!—a tear of gratitude roſe inſtantly

into my eye; and all I could say was, "Good Mrs. Dobſon, I thank you!" We had not rode above a mile from Hampſtead, for there, my dear, it was that Haſtings had his houſe, when the honeſt, obliging creature's joſeph and handkerchief preſerved me almoſt miraculouſly; for Sir Harry having miſſed me in a very little time, had diſpatched ſervants every way, I ſuppoſe, in ſearch of me, not at all attending to the ſafety of his houſe; and two of them now came up to the cart, and enquired of Mrs. Dobſon, if ſhe had met any young woman on the road; Mrs. Dobſon replied, ſhe had not; and the fellows purſued their courſe furiouſly on towards town, ſaying, that probably ſomebody on horſeback, or in a poſt-chaiſe, had taken her up, ſince it was impoſſible for her to walk ſo far in the time.

You can't think how my heart flutter'd, my dear Harriot, at this rencounter, nor imagine

gine what a degree of ſatisfaction the worthy woman expreſſed at my fortunate eſcape. "You ſee, Madam," ſays ſhe, "how lucky it was that you conſented to "be wrapped up;—that joſeph is an old "companion of mine; and I ſhall love it "as long as I live, for being the means "of your deliverance." In this manner we reached Whitechapel, I think ſhe called it, where there is a market kept; and where ſhe had a ſiſter, ſhe told me, a widow woman, who kept a ſnug little houſe, and would afford me all the accommodation in her power.——Accordingly ſhe led me directly to her ſiſter's, who, it ſeems, was a conſiderable dealer in butter and eggs, and was now preparing to ſet out upon the buſineſs of the day, a moſt comfortable breakfaſt of coffee being already on the table, in a neat ſtone kitchen, amply furniſhed with pewter and braſs, of ſo ſhining a complexion, as bore the

ſtrongeſt teſtimony imaginable to the cleanlineſs of the owner.

" Molly," ſays Mrs. Dobſon to her ſiſter upon entering, " I have brought " a ſtranger with me to town this " morning: here is a young lady who " was carried off from her friends by ſome " ſcoundrel about ſeven months ago, and " kept all that time at the villain's houſe " at Hampſtead. The houſe, thank God, " was a-fire as we paſſed by; and the " young lady, while all the family was " buſy about other affairs, ſlipped out, " overtook my cart, and here I have " brought her to be taken care of, 'till " ſhe can ſend to her relations."

" God bleſs her dear ſoul," returned the other, " I ſhall take as much care of " her, as if ſhe was my own child.——I " warrant her poor father and mother have " felt many an aching heart upon her ac-

" count—

"count—but come, Madam, ſit down; "let us have a diſh of coffee, and then "we'll ſhew you to a bed, where you may "reſt a little, after the fatigue of your "journey." So ſaying, ſhe helped me off with my joſeph and handkerchief; while a pretty, modeſt-looking young woman, about eighteen, who appeared to be her daughter, kindly reached me a chair, and ſeemed ſtudious for opportunities to oblige me.

After breakfaſt the two ſiſters, preparing to go away, recommended me to the care of Sally, the young woman of whom I have been juſt ſpeaking, and wiſhed me, in a very affectionate manner, a good morning. Before they withdrew, however, I begged to ſpeak to my worthy friend, Mrs. Dobſon, in a private room: the good woman readily indulged my requeſt; and, if I might judge by the benignity which enlightened her honeſt countenance, ſhe

ſhe came with the more readineſs, from a ſuppoſition that I ſtood in farther need of her ſervices. When we were alone, "My "dear Mrs. Dobſon," ſays I, "you have "eternally obliged me; you have been my "preſerver—my guardian angel—but I "ſhall be the moſt miſerable creature in "the world, unleſs you kindly accept this "trifle (endeavouring to ſqueeze five gui-"neas into her hand) for a pair of gloves." "Madam," replied the generous Mrs. Dobſon, in a ſtile much above her condition) "I am no way ſorry that you make "me this offer, becauſe it confirms my "good opinion of you—but I ſhould think "very meanly of myſelf, if I was capa-"ble of taking a reward for performing "a common act of humanity.—God bleſs "you, my ſweet young lady," continued ſhe, kiſſing my cheek, "and ſend you a "happy meeting with your friends.—While "you ſtay here, every thing will be at "your ſervice, I dare ſay; and, humble

"as

"as we are in the world, be assured you "have fallen among people, who would "rather confer obligations, than receive "them." Oh, Harriot, these are the persons whom your great ones look upon with contempt—these are the persons whom the insolence of the opulence or pomp so frequently considers as little superior to the merely animal creation: yet see by what souls they are informed! —The mind of this woman, my dear, would have done honour to a coronet; yet how many women are there with coronets, who would shed the smallest degree of credit upon her cart?

After the departure of the two industrious sisters, Sally, to whose care I was consigned, advised me, in a very pretty manner, to lie down, insisting upon helping me to undress, and begging I would consider myself at home in their family. I complied with Sally's obliging

obliging intreaties, and accordingly went to bed; but, alas! my dear, I awoke in a high fever; and was actually delirious before the good young woman's mother returned from market. By the exceſs of the worthy people's tenderneſs, and care of an excellent apothecary, who, it ſeems, attended that admirable inſtitution called the Magdalen, about which you and I have ſo frequently talked in the country, I was, in as ſhort a time as poſſible, recovered from my illneſs;—but, though my health was re-eſtabliſhed, my mind was totally unhinged.—The numberleſs diſtreſſes which I had of late ſuſtained, joined to the conſciouſneſs of having been the original author of every misfortune myſelf, was too much for me. Ignorant whether my brother was living or dead—ſatisfied that my poor father and mother muſt be torn by the ſharpeſt of all anxieties—and convinced that my Harriot herſelf muſt have given me up as a loſt abandoned

doned creature, I was continually raving about my fall, and wiſhing for ſome aſylum, where I might waſte out the remainder of my days in penitence for my ſin. Inſtead, therefore, of deſiring ing to write to thoſe who would intereſt themſelves in my behalf, I looked upon the whole world as my irreconcileable enemy; yet, though I inceſſantly raved, I was, nevertheleſs, apparently calm, and perfectly conſiſtent. It was in vain that poor Mrs. Dobſon, the honeſt woman, her ſiſter, and the whole family, oppoſed my reſolution of entering the Magdalen; it was in vain that they aſſured me of a perpetual aſylum with them—I continued inflexible; and what was the abſolute reſult of my delirium, they, who could naturally judge by nothing but appearances, ſet down as the conſequence of premeditated determination; ſo that at laſt they conſented, and I was received, though with ſome eſſential deviations, from the cuſtomary mode

of accepting Penitents, the good apothecary managing matters with as much delicacy as could be wiſhed. I have ſince, however, learned, that, had any of Haſtings's people remained about Hampſtead, to ſatisfy Mrs. Dobſon's enquiries; or could ſhe have prevailed on me to give any account of myſelf after my illneſs, I never ſhould have entered this place. But Sir Harry's houſe, it ſeems, being entirely burnt down, the whole family was removed, before her enquiries began; and I was ſo ſtrenuouſly bent upon my ſcheme, that I evaded an anſwer to her queſtions to myſelf, with a degree of cunning almoſt wonderful in my circumſtances.

I have now, my dear Harriot, been in this houſe above three months, and find that my little underſtanding is as well eſtabliſhed as my health.—I have, therefore, employed myſelf for ſome time

time in drawing up the foregoing account for your information, and submit it entirely to your own discretion, either to conceal it, or to lay it before my relations. My friend, Mrs. Dobson, and her sister, with their good-natured niece and daughter, visit me at every convenient opportunity; and I have now made the worthy people acquainted with the history of my misfortunes, though I have not yet informed them either of my betrayer's name, or the name of my own family; and, what is still more, I have perswaded Sally's mother to accept of fifty guineas, which I had in my purse, for all her trouble and expence; and Mrs. Dobson has promised to wear a ring for my sake, but not 'till she sees me out of this house.—Somehow, worthy as these people are, they look upon public penance as disreputable—perhaps, according to the modes of this country, it may be so; but what, in fact,

fact, is cuſtom, where conſcience is ſolely to determine upon virtues and upon crimes?—It is true, if my imagination had not been diſturbed, I had never dreamt of entering into a place, particularly dedicated to the public penitence of proſtitution:——Yet, alas, Harriot, how am I better than the unhappy poor creatures, whom the pinching hand of neceſſity, or the poignant ſtings of remorſe, have brought to the ſame ſalutary, yet humiliating habitation?—Have I not violated the ſacred laws of virtue?—Have I not blaſted my reputation?—Have I not torn a father's heart with unutterable anguiſh?——Have I not ſteeped the pillow of an excellent mother in deſpair?——And may not the generous youth, my brother, be long ſince murdered on my account?——O ſave me, Harriot, from that dreadful ſuppoſition—Snatch me, if poſſible, from my fears upon this occaſion—or

my

my portion muſt be diſtraction without end.——Gracious God! what a wretch do I appear, on the ſmalleſt recollection! —And ſhall ſuch a creature as I, imagine ſhe is any ways leſſened, by mingling with thoſe who, like herſelf, have ſacrificed the dignity of their ſex, and the honour of their families?—No, Harriot, this is the propereſt habitation for me now—Here meditation, as the poet ſays, may find room even to madneſs—And here the ſtreaming eye of a heart-directed contrition, may poſſibly waſh away the ſtains of guilt, and induce the awful Father of Mercies to overlook my crimes.——But my poor parents—my noble-minded brother—O Harriot, if I yet retain any ſhare in your remembrance, write to me inſtantly—I ſhall not cloſe my eyes, till the return of the poſt.——A letter directed to Mrs. Carter's, my kind hoſteſs, in Whitechapel, for Charlotte Windham, (the name which

I aſſumed in the unſettled ſtate of my mind, to prevent my family from receiving any farther diſgrace) will be immediately forwarded to the loſt unhappy wretch, who poſſeſſed the firſt place in your friendſhip, when ſhe was

LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD, *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

Calais, December 16.

OH Melmoth, my Louisa is innocent—her account is authenticated by the strongest of all testimonies—the acknowledgment of Hastings himself; and the villain has, by this time, probably, attoned with his life for all the tortures of her bosom, and all the agonies of mine.—I have just reached this place; and have sat down, while a little vessel is getting ready to sail with me for Dover, to send you a cursory account of particulars, lest any accident should prevent me from being with you in London as early as the post.

I had juſt received lady Haverſham's copy of Louiſa's affecting hiſtory, which you ſent me with your laſt, when, all life and ſpirits, I dreſſed for the opera, and happened to be introduced into a box, where an Engliſh gentleman was ſitting alone, with whom I fell into ſo familiar a converſation, that I accepted a propoſal which he made, of eating a bit of ſupper at a tavern, after the performance; and this the more readily, as his appearance bore an indication of faſhion, and as, in the courſe of our chat, he mentioned his being intimate with two or three gentlemen of my acquaintance.

When the opera was over, we retired to one of the beſt houſes in the neighbourhood of the theatre; where, after drinking two or three glaſſes of Burgundy, he mentioned that his name was Sir Harry Haſtings, and that he had a ſeat in the county of Oxford.——I need not

not tell you, that this information ſet me inſtantly on fire. I was juſt going to break out, and to demand ſatisfaction for his outrages to Louiſa, when, recollecting it would be beſt to hear his own account of matters—for fear, after all, that Miſs Mildmay might draw up a ſtory to anſwer her own purpoſes, and treſpaſs a little upon veracity, to extenuate the infamy of her flight. With this view, I aſked Sir Harry, if he was acquainted with the Mildmays, as I knew ſomething of a gentleman, who had paid his addreſſes to a young lady of that family.——"Acquainted with "them!" replied Sir Harry; "yes, I "am perfectly acquainted with them; "and it is, in a great meaſure, on "account of that very young lady, "that I have quitted England.—You "muſt know, Sir," continued the communicative baronet, "that I am a near "neighbour of the Mildmays, and have,

" for above four years, entertained a
" paſſion of the moſt extravagant na-
" ture for their daughter—but ſome-
" how, though my fortune was as good
" as any other admirer's, and my pro-
" poſals much more advantageous, ſtill
" ſome freedoms which I had taken
" with the women, created unſurmount-
" able objections to my character, and
" my addreſſes were rejected with a de-
" gree of diſreſpect that gave me no
" little mortification. Stung with re-
" ſentment at the cavalier manner in
" which I was treated, and burning alſo
" to obtain Miſs Mildmay, I made a
" fruitleſs attempt to carry her off.
" —In ſome time after the failure of
" this deſign, one Sir Robert Harold,
" (poſſibly the gentleman you mean,
" ſir,) commenced an acquaintance at
" Bath with Miſs Mildmay, and work-
" ed himſelf ſo ſucceſsfully into her af-
" fections, that a day was ſet apart for

" the

" the celebration of their nuptials, " though this happy lover was, to the " full, as great a profligate as myſelf. " The family, however, paid dear for " the preference which they gave this " gentleman, for, before the wedding " day, Sir Robert found means to gain " the laſt favour from Miſs Mildmay; " and a quarrel happening between " them immediately after, the intend- " ed bridegroom fairly took his leave, " and left the diſdainful Louiſa to feel, " in turn, every ſting of diſappointment, " and every pungency of diſgrace.

" Miſs Mildmay on this was inſtantly " ſent to town, to the houſe of a re- " lation, one Mrs. Darnel; and, as I " had my ſpies continually at work, I " found out at once the place of her " deſtination, and followed her inſtant- " ly, being ſtill ſo ridiculouſly beſotted, " that her affair with Harold no way

" leſſened either the exceſs of my love,
" or the extravagance of my venera-
" tion. In fact, what would have damp-
" ed the ardour of any other man's paſ-
" ſion, only ſerved to increaſe the fer-
" vour of mine; ſo that, inſtead of
" thinking to poſſeſs her on the ſame
" terms with that lucky dog Harold,
" I was uncommonly deſirous of mak-
" ing her mine for ever. I wanted to
" be ſure of her; and, notwithſtanding
" I had a thouſand times ridiculed other
" fellows, for ſcandalouſly ſtooping to
" patch up a cracked reputation, ſtill
" I went on, as if her character had
" been unblemiſhed; and felt infinitely
" more uneaſineſs on account of her
" prepoſſeſſion for the deſtroyer of her
" honour, than for her actual deviation
" from the ſentiments of virtue.—But
" I beg your pardon," cried Haſtings,
interrupting himſelf; " I am treſpaſſing
" on your leiſure, by a dull repetition

" of

" of an affair, which cannot poſſibly
" afford you the ſmalleſt entertainment.
" People are apt to teize others with
" thoſe circumſtances which affect their
" own peace; and I never hear Miſs
" Mildmay's name mentioned, but what
" I am for entering into an account
" of my paſſion for her, and a narrative
" of my various diſappointments."

" O, Sir," replied I, " you cannot
" oblige me more, than by indulging
" yourſelf on the ſubject. I am ex-
" tremely entertained by relations of
" this nature; and, if there is no par-
" ticular ſecret," ——." Secret! Sir,"
returned my brother baronet——" O
" there is no ſecret — I dare ſay, by
" this time, every thing is public enough
" in England; and therefore I can have
" no objection to gratify your curioſity,
" ſince ſuch a gratification is the higheſt
" pleaſure I can do myſelf. You muſt
" know,

" know, Sir, that Miſs Mildmay had
" ſcarcely arrived at her couſin Dar-
" nel's, when the prevailing rethoric of
" one thouſand guineas, and a five hun-
" dred pound annuity for life, prevailed
" upon the worthy relation to deliver
" her into my hands. The price, ex-
" travagant as it was, I did not matter
" ſixpence; but it ſeems the uncon-
" ſcionable Jezabel was to receive ſome-
" thing very handſome from Harold's
" ſiſter, lady Haverſham, for contriv-
" ing a method of removing thoſe in-
" conveniencies to which the beautiful
" delinquent might be expoſed, during
" her abſence from her family; ſuch as
" want of equipage, and other eſſen-
" tial articles.——Theſe, lady Haver-
" ſham, as Harold's ſiſter, could not
" be ſeen immediately to furniſh, as
" Miſs Mildmay's delicacy would be
" alarmed; and as Mrs. Darnel's cir-
" cumſtances were narrow, ſhe was to

" receive

"receive a secret sufficiency for the "purpose, and to be properly consider-"ed for her politeness into the bargain. "This was the reason why she insisted "upon the exorbitant terms I have "mentioned.—But enough of terms— "let it satisfy, therefore, that she con-"trived a feasible excuse to leave "Louisa alone one evening—that the "servants were all sent out of the way, "and that, with the assistance of four "or five friends, who were provided in "case of accidents, I carried her off to "a house which I had at Hampstead, "and kept her there for full seven "months."

Now, Melmoth, see my astonishing command of temper—"Seven months!" interrupted I, *so* calmly—"Well, and "surely in that time you had opportu-"nities enough of carrying your point, "either by marriage, or a more expe-

"ditious

" ditious method —— you underſtand
" me"—" No, by all that's good,"
replied he, " ſtrange as it may appear—
" I was totally diſappointed of ſuc-
" ceſs.—She was in a violent fever the
" principal part of the time; and, in
" the intervals of her recovery, nothing
" could either perſwade or terrify her
" into an acceptance of me.—— The
" few friends who were in the ſecret,
" adviſed me to proceed by other means;
" and laughed inceſſantly on account of
" my romantic purity of affection, as
" they termed it, for a caſt miſtreſs.—
" Their ridicule too was the more ſe-
" vere, becauſe I had been myſelf one
" of the very wildeſt in the whole
" knot; and had taken ſuch liberties
" at various times with the ſex, as ren-
" dered my preſent behaviour to the
" laſt degree extraordinary.—There is
" nothing which we can ſtand ſo little
" as the ſhaft of ridicule.—I was a

" thouſand

" thouſand times determined to proſe-
" cute their advice — and frequently
" bluſhed in ſecret at the littleneſs of
" my conduct, in thinking of Miſs
" Mildmay for a wife — Yet my unac-
" countable love got the better of my
" ſhame, and I was terrified from at-
" tempting any actual violation, be-
" cauſe I knew the greatneſs of her
" ſpirit; and was apprehenſive, that, in
" ſuch a caſe, ſhe might lay a deſperate
" hand upon her perſon.—She had re-
" peatedly threatened as much, and,
" I am poſitive, would have been as
" good as her word."

" It is wonderful," interrupted I,
" that ſome of your friends did not
" ſpeak of her being with you — that
" none of your ſervants, as you were
" ſo near a neighbour of the Mildmays,
" did not, at ſome time, write to their
" friends in the country about the

" young

" young lady——or, that the phyſi-
" cians"——

" O, the eaſieſt things in the world
" to manage," cried Sir Harry—" I
" had ſecrets of my friends, as a ſe-
" curity for the preſervation of mine—
" my ſervants were all true to the back
" bone, and had been tried a thouſand
" times—and as for the phyſicians—an
" additional fee made them as ſilent as
" the grave at any time."——

" Well," interrogated I, " and was
" it poſſible that ſhe could eſcape at
" laſt out of your hands, without re-
" warding you for all the trouble which
" you were at upon her account?"

" It *was* poſſible," replied Sir Harry,
" becauſe ſhe *did*—and I will tell you
" by what unfortunate accident.——A
" parcel of us had been making merry
" one

" one evening below ſtairs, and we
" were all pretty well in for it, before
" we thought of going to bed—For
" my part, though I had drank very
" near four bottles, I had no inclina-
" tion to undreſs—I therefore took up
" a volume of Triſtram Shandy, which
" lay by the bed-ſide, and continued
" ſo long at this, that nature was at
" laſt wearied out, and I ſunk inſen-
" ſibly into ſo ſound a ſleep, that it
" was with much difficulty they could
" wake me, when the houſe was in
" flames—for the bed-curtains, by ſome
" means, reaching my candle, the whole
" furniture was inſtantly in a blaze; and
" the fire, I ſuppoſe, ſpread through
" the other apartments with the great-
" eſt rapidity:—in the confuſion oc-
" caſioned by this unlucky circum-
" ſtance, Miſs Mildmay contrived to
" make her eſcape; and though, the
" moment her flight was diſcovered, I
" poſted

" poſted meſſengers through all the dif-
" ferent roads, and even continued an
" indefatigable ſearch after her for above
" two months, I never could gain any
" ſatisfactory account.——Tired out at
" length with a ſearch which was pro-
" ductive of nothing but diſappoint-
" ment and mortification, I gave her
" over, and quitted England, in hopes
" that diſtance and time would mitigate
" the diſtreſſes of my mind, if it could
" not even reſtore my tranquillity.—
" So much, Sir, for Miſs Mildmay—
" and now I have been ſo communica-
" tive, I hope you will not think me
" impertinent, if I aſk your name, and
" beg to know which part of England
" is favoured with your reſidence."

" That," returned I, " you ſhall ſoon
" know—My name is Harold.—I have
" an eſtate in Somerſetſhire—but my

" principal

" principal reſidence, when I am in " England, is in Groſvenor-Square."—

Have you ever, my dear Charles, particularly remarked Garrick, in the ſecond act, I think it is, of Lear, where Goneril has ſtruck off one half of his followers, and the poor old king tells his melancholly tale to Regan, from whom he expects to meet the moſt dutiful returns of filial gratitude and affection—Have you, I ſay, remarked the intenſe, the inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment of the venerable monarch, when, inſtead of receiving the leaſt conſolation from the only child of which he now reckons himſelf poſſeſſed, the unnatural harpy aggravates the indignity he has ſuffered, and deſires him even to diſmiſs one half of thoſe knights, which have yet been ſpared him by her infamous ſiſter?—If you recollect the face of our modern Roſcius in that celebrated ſcene, you

will have ſome tolerable idea of the amazement which this reply inſtantly ſpread over the whole countenance of Haſtings——" Harold!"—exclaimed he—" Harold!" drawing his chair inſenſibly from the table, and fixing his eyes on me, with an abſolute wildneſs of ſurprize—" Pray, Sir, are you the " Sir Robert Harold—who ſo lately " courted Miſs Mildmay?"

" The very ſame," cried I, running to the door, and bolting it—" and " you are the Sir Harry Haſtings, who " have been villain enough to carry off " that admirable woman, in a forcible " manner, from her family; and to " impriſon her for ſeveral months in a " houſe, where her delicacy was to be " treated with a continued round of " outrage, and where the impriſonment " of her perſon was to do an irreparable injury to her reputation.—Draw,

" Sir,—

"Sir,—for the ſame providential diſ-
"penſation which has delivered her out
"of your hands, now delivers you up
"for puniſhment to mine."

"Mighty pretty truly," returned Sir Harry, clapping his hand alſo upon his ſword, but retreating a little—"and "ſo I have been all this while unbo-"ſoming myſelf to my greateſt enemy, "upon a full ſuppoſition that I was "making an agreeable acquaintance, "if not a valuable friend?—Truly, a "very pretty rencounter—but I deſerve "it all.——What buſineſs had this "damn'd tongue of mine to run on ſo "impertinently in the company of an "abſolute ſtranger?—And ſo, Sir Ro-"bert Harold, I muſt give you ſatis-"faction for behaving like an infamous "ſcoundrel to Miſs Mildmay?"

"dye, ſtand up as an advocate for in-
"jured innocence; and talk of chaſtiz-
"ing offenders, who are, comparative-
"ly, ſpotleſs to yourſelf?—Audacious
"ſcoundrel! let me rather, as infinitely
"the leaſt culpable of the two, here
"take vengeance upon *you*, for all the
"calamities which have befallen a wo-
"man, whom I doat upon to diſtrac-
"tion.—From the moment I firſt heard
"of your ſucceſs with her, your very
"name planted a thouſand ſcorpions in
"my boſom; and I would have ſacri-
"ficed you to my rage, had not an indi-
"cation of my reſentment been likely to
"diſappoint my deſigns upon Louiſa.
"—I therefore ſtudiouſly avoided ſee-
"ing you, well knowing the vehemence
"of my own temper.—But the time is
"now come—and it is not a little of
"your blood, which can gratify the
"greedineſs of my revenge."

Melmoth,

Melmoth, cowardice and guilt are inſeparable companions.—By the God of Heaven, this harangue of Sir Harry's almoſt petrified me.—I felt myſelf a paltry deſpicable villain; and I actually believe, had not his ſword been already pointed at my boſom, the juſtice of his reply would have ſham'd my reſentment into ſilence, and awed me into all conſcientious acknowledgments of the keeneſt ſelf-reproach—but my manhood was rouſed at the ſight of his naked weapon; and to it we went, with as determined a malignity, as ever rankled in the breaſts of men.—Sir Harry had great command of his ſword, and was prodigiouſly ſtrong in the arm—for ſome time he thought to conquer me by a mere exertion of force;—but finding this method ineffectual, he threw out one of thoſe exquiſite feints, which none but a maſter indeed ſhould ever think of giving into.—I don't believe

own. Adieu, therefore, my dear Melmoth, and be assured, that, let my fate be whatsoever it may, I must be, as long as I live,

Your true friend,

R. HAROLD.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

Lady HAVERSHAM *to the Counteſs of* BLANDFORD.

My dear Lady BLANDFORD,

MY cares are now over—Bob is at laſt married to Miſs Mildmay—and has turned out the very thing I always thought he would—a man of real probity, and ſound underſtanding.—Your ladyſhip already knows what a variety of misfortunes attended my ſweet ſiſter, from the time of her expulſion from her father's, till her departure from the Magdalen.—So that all which is neceſſary for me to relate, is the reception which her family gave her, and the reception which ſhe gave my brother.

I have already told you, that the moment her poor parents ſaw her letter to Miſs

Miſs Beauclerk, they wrote up to me, deſiring me to take her inſtantly away from the ſtrange aſylum which ſhe had choſen in her delirium, and promiſing to be in town within a week, when every thing ſhould be ſettled to my ſatisfaction; for I had frequently told them, how paſſionately Bob continued to love the unfortunate young lady, under all the diſadvantages of what we conſidered a ſcandalous elopement.——They at the ſame time ſent me up Louiſa's little hiſtory, where I ſaw plainly enough, that notwithſtanding the unaccountable part which my brother had acted, the dear deceived girl could not, by any means, eraſe him from her heart.—A copy of this letter I therefore got that worthy man, Mr. Melmoth, to take, for Bob's immediate uſe, and flew myſelf to the Magdalen, to which, as I have been, upon ſome occaſions, a benefactreſs, I have always acceſs, and enquired for

Louiſa

Louiſa by her aſſumed appellation of Windham.—The good Mrs. Dobſon, and her ſiſter, who have acquired ſo juſt a conſideration with Louiſa, were with her when I went in—the two honeſt women, it ſeems, are intimately acquainted with the matron, and that acquaintance admitted them, whenever they pleaſed, to Miſs Windham.—They were now ſitting in the matron's room, when my appearance threw the little group into the greateſt conſternation.—Louiſa, the moment ſhe ſaw me, ſtarted from her ſeat with a light'ning-like rapidity, and exclaiming, "Lady Haverſham! "lady Haverſham!" fainted inſtantly in my arms.—Her two friends ſeemed prodigiouſly ſtruck—but nevertheleſs exerted themſelves ſo ſucceſsfully in recovering her, that ſhe was quickly in a capacity of converſing; which, when they found, they propoſed to withdraw, though Mrs. Dobſon had a viſible reluctance

luctance in her manner, that made me conſider her with extraordinary attention.—Miſs Mildmay, however, would not ſuffer them to ſtir; but, taking each by the hand, preſented them with *ſuch* a grace to me, that I could not help kiſſing her heartily for the condeſcending dignity of the recollection.—"My "dear lady Haverſham," ſays ſhe, "you "have, I ſuppoſe, ſeen my letter to "Miſs Beauclerk."—I anſwered in the affirmative.—"Why then," continued ſhe, "give me leave to preſent two of "the worthieſt creatures in the univerſe "to your ladyſhip.—This, Madam, is "the excellent Mrs. Dobſon—and this "the beneficent Mrs. Carter, whom I "have mentioned in that paper."

I roſe, and ſaluted each of them; thanking them in the warmeſt terms, for their generous attention to Miſs Mildmay; and, begging to know in what manner

manner I could be ſerviceable to them on her account.—"O, Madam," cried Mrs. Dobſon, falling on her knees, and kiſſing my hand with great eagerneſs, "you have been long entitled to our utmoſt ſervices——to the everlaſting "prayers of me and my whole family. "—Your ladyſhip's munificent hand, "and your noble brother's, have been "the bleſſed inſtruments of Providence, "to ſnatch both me and mine from "deſtruction.—Your ladyſhip may remember the unhappy farmer Jenkins, "of Saliſbury, who was thrown into "gaol through the inhumanity of a "brutal landlord, for reſenting an indecent liberty taken with his daughter: "I, Madam, was wife to that Jenkins, "and mother to that daughter.—Your "gracious brother redeemed my huſband from priſon, and gave a marriage portion with my child.—Your "ladyſhip ſcarcely heard of Sir Robert's

" unexampled generoſity, before you " ſent us down ſuch a ſum, as enabled " us to pay off all our debts, and ſet " us, once more, above the frowns of " the world.—We were utterly unknown " both to your brother and you; and " had no recommendation to your pity, " but the merit of our diſtreſs.—May " the great God of heaven and earth, " ſhower down eternal bleſſings upon " both your heads; and may you both " feel that happineſs a hundred times " doubled, with which you filled the " hearts of both me and mine!"

Grateful, generouſly-minded creature! —My dear lady Blandford, you can't think how the tears rolled down my cheeks at this pathetic addreſs.—I remembered the name perfectly well; and it was the merit of my brother's behaviour on that occaſion, which originally rivetted him to the boſom of Louiſa.—

You

You recollect the affair yourſelf, I dare ſay; for I believe I ſhewed you, as a curioſity, what a well-written letter of thanks I received from poor Mrs. Jenkins, immediately after I had ordered the remittance, which dwelt ſo ſtrongly upon the good woman's memory. I raiſed her up, you may be ſure, as ſoon as I poſſibly could, and told her, that the young lady whom ſhe had befriended ſo much, would, I hope, in a ſhort time, honour my brother with her hand, as the match was what lay cloſely to the heart of both our families.—She heard me with a look that indicated a wildneſs of ſatisfaction; and, burſting into a loud flood of tears, ran about the room, crying, "Thank God!—thank God!—I have lived to be of ſome little uſe to my benefactors!"

You will undoubtedly be ſurprized, my dear lady Blandford, at finding the

wife of a poor huſbandman expreſſing herſelf with ſuch an air of elegance, as Mrs. Dobſon.—The heart of the meaneſt peaſant may be as ſentimentally elegant as a prince's—but it is education alone, which forms the delivery of our ſentiments, and gives the cuſtomary characteriſtic of order and diſtinction.—For my own part, I was ſo much ſurprized at her manner, that I could not help telling her how greatly it ſtruck me—To which ſhe modeſtly replied, "That "I was all goodneſs—but that her fa- "ther was a curate in Wiltſhire, who "had ſeveral children, and not more "than forty pounds a year——At the "ſame time, therefore," continued ſhe, "that he took every neceſſary care "about the improvement of our minds, "he took care to bring us up in a "manner that ſuited with the narrow- "neſs of our fortunes—ſo that we be- "came ſomewhat remarkable through the

" the neighbourhood for our induſtry,
" and our education.—We all married
" men of humble ſituations; and hence
" ariſes the trifling diſparity which your
" ladyſhip is pleaſed to obſerve between
" our converſation and our circum-
" ſtances."—But to go on—

Having ſhewn Louiſa the letter I received from her father, ſhe conſented to go away with me inſtantly; but begged that Mrs. Dobſon and Mrs. Carter would favour her with their company, whenever ſhe took the liberty to requeſt it. —The worthy women aſſured her of their immediate concurrence, and we parted with many tears on both ſides, after I had left a fifty pound bill for the uſe of the charity.

Louiſa was at my houſe about four days, when her father and her mother came to town.—The dear girl, though

ſhe impatiently longed to ſee them, was, however, extremely terrified at the thoughts of their approach. "How, my dear lady Haverſham," would ſhe exclaim, "ſhall I be ever able to look "them in the face?—There is one "guilt which I acknowledge; and they "have nothing but my own word to "purge away the imputation of a ſe-"cond.—Mrs. Darnell's aſſertion may "be taken as ſoon as mine.——Good "God! how ſhall I look them in the "face?"

They came at laſt—but with hearts prepoſſeſſed entirely as ſhe could wiſh. They had ſeen ſome of Haſtings's favourite ſervants, before their departure from the country; and, partly by menaces, and partly by bribes, they came at the truth, which correſponded exactly with the relation of Louiſa.—Senſible, therefore, only to her late ſufferings,

the

the father and the brother entirely forgot their reſentment, on account of her original error; and the doating mother, who conſidered matters in a more tender light than either, was even ready to condemn herſelf, for agreeing to the expulſion of ſo deſerving a daughter, when ſhe came to weigh all the misfortunes which that expulſion had fatally produced.—In this frame of mind the three came to town, attended by Mrs. and Miſs Beauclerck, when Louiſa was informed they were all below ſtairs.—Sweet girl, how ſhe trembled!—how ſhe wept!—By the force of hartſhorn and argument, I, however, recovered her, and ſhe came down, leaning on my arm, into the back parlour, where they were aſſembled.—She had ſcarcely entered the room, when the poor mother, frantic almoſt with impatience and joy, ſprung from her ſeat, and, faſtening round her neck, ſtrained her in her arms, with a violence

that almoſt bordered upon diſtraction.—Louiſa's feelings were no leſs exquiſite—She endeavoured to return the embrace with an equal degree of fervour, and both ſunk lifeleſs upon the floor, before either could give utterance to a ſingle word.—The colonel ran to his ſiſter; while the venerable old gentleman ſeemed entirely employed about the recovery of his excellent lady;—as to Mrs. Beauclerck, her daughter, and myſelf, we could ſcarcely afford them any aſſiſtance for our tears.

When the mother and the daughter became ſomewhat compoſed, the latter threw herſelf at her father's feet, and begged at once his pardon and his bleſſing.—The old gentleman, whoſe heart was long ſince melted, looked at her for ſome time, with an eagerneſs of ſilent rapture, as if he was perfectly willing, yet totally unable, to comply with her

her requeſt: at laſt, no longer maſter of himſelf, he fell inſtinctively upon his knees, as ſhe knelt, and, catching her in his arms, exclaimed, "O my child, "my child!" and ſobbed out with ſuch a violence, that one would imagine his heart was abſolutely burſting.——We, therefore, tore him up in a manner;—but Louiſa was rivetted on her knees—there was no prevailing upon her to riſe.—After her father was forced into a chair, ſhe turned to her brother, who now hung weeping over her; and, while a large drop ſeem faſtened upon each of her cheeks, ſhe cried out—"O, Harry, "what has my infamy coſt you!—Can "you—but it is impoſſible—you never "can forgive the wretch who has—"but are you actually recovered?—O "what a wretch am I, to involve every "body, who loves me, in deſtruction!"—The colonel replied to this, in a manner equally polite and tender; and Mrs.

and Miſs Beauclerk now coming to claim ſome little ſhare of her attention, Louiſa began to grow more temperate, and received them both with the warmeſt tokens of a moſt cordial affection.—In a little time we were all reſtored to ourſelves; and the whole company were kind enough to become my gueſts, during their continuation in town; nay, in leſs than two hours, Miſs Mildmay, at the deſire of her parents, conſented to overlook my brother's behaviour; and a chariot was diſpatched for Mrs. Dobſon and Mrs. Carter, whom Mrs. Mildmay impatiently wanted to ſee, and who good-naturedly came to us in leſs than two hours more.——But now, my dear lady Blandford, prepare for ſomething extraordinary——

Mr. Melmoth, whom we have long thought a mighty worthy man, and who, for many years paſt, has been indulging

ing a moſt melancholly turn of diſpoſition, on account of a wife and an infant, who died while he was quite a young man, and abroad, is now the happieſt of human beings:—he has found that wife, and that child, in the perſon of Mrs. Beauclerck, and her amiable daughter.—Two days after Mr. Mildmay came to town, Mr. Melmoth received a letter from my brother, with orders to communicate it inſtantly to me; and as Mr. Melmoth has a friendſhip of an uncommon nature for Bob, he never heſitates a moment to execute his commands— (but, by the bye, lady Blandford, you will ſee what a narrow eſcape Bob has had in another duel.—God grant it may be the laſt—for if any accident ſhould happen to him, I ſhould abſolutely run diſtracted.)—Well, as I was ſaying, Mr. Melmoth came to my houſe after dinner, and, requeſting to ſpeak with me in private, produced my brother's

brother's letter; obſerving that Providence ſeemed particularly inclined to exculpate Miſs Mildmay; and no leſs deſirous of puniſhing thoſe, in an exemplary manner, who had been *intentionally* inſtrumental (that was his qualifying word for Bob's ſake) in that young lady's diſtreſs.—I took the letter with a trembling hand; and, though I rejoiced at this undeniable confirmation of Louiſa's rectitude, ſtill it was with the greateſt difficulty I could get through the account of the duel, which you will find incloſed in this pacquet.—I was obliged to uſe my hartſhorn twenty times;—and I don't know that I could have read it at all, had not Mr. Melmoth previouſly aſſured me, that my brother was in health.

When I had at laſt got through the contents, I inſiſted upon Mr. Melmoth's going in with me to the company, as he

he was intimately known by character to every body, though with ſome he might be unacquainted by perſon.—He accordingly complied; but judge, my dear, the univerſal aſtoniſhment, when, at the very inſtant of his entrance, Mrs Beauclerck ſcreamed out, "Mr. Villars!"—and fell back into her chair.—Alarmed at the name, the manner, and the voice, he flew to her, and exclaiming, "O my "Nancy, my Nancy," raiſed her up in his arms; while her beautiful daughter ran wild to her aſſiſtance, not knowing what to think of this extravagant ſurprize.—Not to keep you any longer in ſuſpence, my dear lady Blandford, the company ſoon diſcovered, that Mrs. Beauclerk was the long loſt wife of Mr. Melmoth; and that ſome very extraordinary circumſtance had divided them, without any fault on either ſide, for a painful ſeries of years.—What, however, appeared very ſtrange, was, that

that each imagined the other to be dead; and that the information concerning the death of each, was communicated to the other, by no leſs indubitable a channel of intelligence, than Mr. Melmoth's own father.—Mr. Melmoth's father, it ſeems, was a great Eaſt-India merchant, and intended to give his ſon a large fortune—but the young gentleman falling in love, and marrying contrary to his father's conſent, the old man would not be reconciled to him upon any terms, but his taking a voyage to the Indies, and continuing abroad for an interval of three years.—Mr. Melmoth, having no reſource for the maintenance of his wife, but his father's bounty, thought it better to accept of theſe cruel conditions, than to expoſe the woman of his ſoul to penury and diſtreſs: he complied, therefore, though with a bleeding heart, and accordingly ſet out in about thirteen months after their marriage,

riage, just as she had been delivered of a daughter.—He had scarce reached the place of his destination in the Indies, when his father wrote over a melancholly letter, containing an account of his wife's death, and his child's; and advising him to think of enlarging the term of his residence in that quarter of the globe. This was an advice which the young gentleman readily pursued. After the loss of all that was most dear to his wishes, England became hateful to his thoughts, and he did not return, till two years after the death of his father; when he had the mortification to find, that the old gentleman had left all his wealth to some remoter branches of his family.—Young Mr. Villars, for so I shall now call him, though disappointed in his expectations of succeeding to his father's fortune, was, however, in very affluent circumstances himself. During his residence abroad, he had acquired

ed immenſe riches, and had been left by a friend no leſs than eighty thouſand pounds to take the name of Melmoth. His property, when he came home, he chiefly laid out in the purchaſe of lands; and Bob has told me repeatedly, the value of his eſtates is a clear ſeven thouſand a year.——Yet, though he came home a very young man, and a very rich one, he ſtill avoided mixing much with ſociety.—The company of women he particularly ſhunned; and employed himſelf chiefly in acts of beneficence, and literary reſearches.—I don't recollect by what accident my brother Bob and he became originally acquainted—but, notwithſtanding the diſparity of years, and the diametrically oppoſite caſt of complexions, he entertained a very high eſteem for Bob; and would ſometimes, on his account, viſit at my houſe, and be ſociable.——I always reſpected him—I ſaw what an excellent heart he poſſeſſed;

poſſeſſed; and he gained my eſteem entirely, by the almoſt parental ſolicitude which he ſhewed for the welfare of my giddy-headed brother——and ſee, my dear, how Providence has rewarded him.—In the very moment that he was labouring for the happineſs of other people, we ſee his own tranquillity reſtored; and find, that the benignity which induced him to mitigate the diſtreſſes of his friends, has been the principal means of removing all thoſe diſtreſſes under which he ſtruggled himſelf.—Who, lady Blandford, ought not to be virtuous, even from intereſt?—ſince, if the conſciouſneſs of having performed a good action, is not a ſufficient reward, we are ſo generally certain of finding it highly to our advantage in the end?—But now, to ſay ſomething of Mrs. Villars—This lady, on the ſuppoſed death of her huſband, was reduced to ſome difficulties for ſupport—and, had not a diſtant

distant relation unexpectedly left her a considerable sum of money, she, perhaps, had found it necessary to work for bread. Old Mr. Villars would not advance her a shilling;—and few are fond of cultivating a friendship with calamity. Soured, therefore, at the world, and absolutely wretched for the loss of her husband, the moment she found herself in circumstances, she retired to a sequestered habitation in the country, and has lived there ever since in a very private manner, visiting very few people, and continuing an intimacy scarcely at any house but Mr. Mildmay's.

Thus far, lady Blandford, Mr. and Mrs. Villars's story seemed to account for their separation; but still there wanted some probable causes for old Mr. Villars's conduct, as well as for his daughter-in-law's assuming the name of Beauclerk. Most of us, therefore, honestly

nestly expressed our surprize, that the consideration of Mr. Melmoth's marrying a young lady without a fortune, could induce his father to practise so barbarous a deceit upon an only son; and Mr. Melmoth himself seemed astonished, that his lady should, without any reasonable foundation, sacrifice his name, while she continued to dedicate herself so religiously to his memory.—Mrs. Melmoth blushed, and only said, she had her reasons.—

"That she had," cried out Mrs. Dobson, (who had been in the house some time, and now eagerly thrust herself forward.) I was amazed at the good woman; and, indeed, so was all the company:—but as she appeared pregnant with something of importance, Mr. Melmoth entreated she would go on.—

"I will Sir," answered she; "but, "first of all, give me leave to ask you "a question or two.—Pray, do you re- "collect one William Dobson, who for- "merly was a favourite servant of your "father's?"—

"Yes; very well," returned Mr. Mel- moth.—

"And pray, don't you recollect, "that, before your marriage with Miss "Nancy Markham, the lady who now "stands here, was publicly known, the "same William Dobson one day told "you, in confidence, that your father "was in love with Miss Markham, and "intended to offer very advantageous "settlements, in hopes that the great- "ness of the proposal, might obviate "the difference of his age, and induce her "to accept of him as a husband? Pray, "Sir, do you remember this?"

"Yes,

"Yes, Madam," replied Mr. Melmoth, "I remember it perfectly well."

"Why then, Sir, the whole affair is "nothing more than this—Your father, "ſtung almoſt to madneſs, at finding "himſelf cut off from the firſt wiſh of "his heart, reſolved upon the barbarous "method of ſeparating you, and mak- "ing each believe that the other was "dead. An aſſurance of this nature "coming from a father, could admit "of no doubt; and you might either of "you have entered into a ſecond mar- "riage, even before accident had unde- "ceived you. In either caſe, the diſ- "covery of the deceit would have only "increaſed your diſtreſs; and in the "former, ſo long as it remained undiſ- "covered, ſo long he was certain of "making you miſerable.——This was "not, however, the whole of his de- "ſign.—If he could make your lady

" entertain a belief of your demiſe, he " thought it ſtill poſſible for himſelf, at " ſome opportunity, to gratify the horrid " purpoſes of his imagination.—" Though ſhe was his daughter, he " ſtill continued to love her; and once, " I believe, actually inſinuated a propoſition that muſt be ſhocking to " humanity.—This was at a time when " her neceſſities were extreme, and " when he hoped the ſeverity of her ſituation would leſſen the horror of his " overture.—But let me hurry from this " dreadful part of my narrative.—When " he found himſelf treated with the abhorrence which he merited—when " your lady even threatened to expoſe " him to the world, and talked of applying inſtantly to a magiſtrate, if he " ever more came within her doors, he " grew outrageous—he hired ruffians " to inſult her; and omitted no opportunity of ſlandering her reputation.

" When

" When, therefore, she retired from " London, she found it I suppose ne- " ceſſary to change her name, for fear of " his infamous machinations.——This " was what he told my husband he was " fearful of; and it is very fortunate " the lady took that precaution; for I " have been well assured, he made " every possible enquiry, to discover the " place of her retreat."—

" Gracious God!" exclaimed Mr. Melmoth, " and can there be such fa- " thers?—But pray, Madam, tell me " by what means you have gained this " information."—

" From the repository of all his se- " crets, William Dobson, Sir; whom, " after the death of a former husband, " once the object of lady Haversham's " benevolence, I married.—Mr. Dob- " son often told me the story, and se-

" verely reproached himself at times,
" for continuing in the old gentleman's
" service.—But it seems he was a liberal
" master, and therefore William, I sup-
" pose, endeavoured to check the pun-
" gency of his reflections.—Mr. Dob-
" son, Sir, died about six months ago;
" and, on his death-bed, conjured me,
" if ever I found a proper opportunity,
" to make this discovery.—I would not
" disturb the ashes of the dead unne-
" cessarily; but the surprize which you
" expressed at your lady's change of
" name, affecting me in a very parti-
" cular manner, I could conceal the cir-
" cumstance no longer.—Perhaps I
" have been presumptuous.—I beg par-
" don of the honourable company; and
" hope they will excuse my impertti-
" nence, from a just consideration of
" my end."—

Lady

Lady Blandford, did you ever hear ſo dreadful a ſtory?—The barbarous—but let us not think of the monſter—the bare idea of him curdles my very blood, and I ſhake with horror at the recollection of having written ſo much on ſo deteſtable a ſubject.—

When Mrs. Dobſon had done her ſtory, every body endeavoured to ſhift the converſation; and none of us having yet felicitated Mr. Melmoth on his happy diſcovery of ſuch a wife, and ſuch a daughter, we took this opportunity of doing it very ſincerely.—The worthy man was all extaſy; while the two ladies ſat between Mrs. Mildmay and Louiſa, enjoying a thouſand exquiſite feelings at ſo fortunate an event; and every now and then teſtifying their ſatisfaction with an expreſſive flood of tears.——Mr. Melmoth, my dear lady Blandford, will be now quite another

creature.—His temper has already undergone a total alteration; and you cannot think how pleased I am at the impatience which he manifests, if he is but a moment absent from his new-found happiness. He loves his wife with an excess of tenderness, and indeed well he may—for a more excellent, or a more lovely woman, of her age, I believe, is not to be found in England.——His daughter too is as fine a young lady in person, as ever I saw, and has a mind that even adds a lustre to her external accomplishments.—— Well, and what do you think has been already done about her?—why, her father offered fifty thousand pounds with her to colonel Mildmay; and old Mr. Mildmay is so heartily for the match, that he proposes to make a double wedding of it, the moment my brother arrives in town.——Four and twenty hours ago, Mr. Mildmay would not have consent-

ed

ed so readily to his son's marriage with Miss Beauclerk.—But Miss Melmoth's fortune has an irresistible charm; and fifty thousand pounds will be no trifling affair to support the coronet which he expects in his family.——Yet I don't know but this reflection would be a little cruel to the good old man, if I was writing to any body but lady Blandford.

Mr. Mildmay, his lady, and the colonel, (for Mr. Melmoth deprived me of two visitors) were now in town about five days, when Bob arrived at my door; The father and son were looking through the parlour window, when he stopped, and both ran out good-naturedly to meet him, and insisted he would make no apologies for what was past.—Faults, they observed, had been on both sides; and since he had chastized that villain Hastings, they could forgive him every thing.—Bob, lady Blandford,

Blandford, was in a most elegant undress, and really looked charmingly.—Louisa, who was prepared to expect him every hour, was not much alarmed when he was introduced. She and her mamma were sitting in the dining room, when he came up between Mr. Mildmay and the colonel.—I led the van; and Alexander himself, in the midst of all his victories, I am pretty certain, never experienced one half of my satisfaction.——You know how I love the recreant, and how I esteem the Mildmays.—This happy reconciliation, therefore, almost overcame me—so that instead of saying any thing to Louisa on my entrance, I retired to a sopha in one corner of the room, and indulged myself in a delicious flood of tears.—Bob, however, was all himself: with an air of the deepest respect, yet of the greatest manliness, he went up to the two ladies, and, falling on his knee,

held

held a hand of each alternately to his lips, without once breaking out into any aukward excuſes; which, as matters then ſtood, muſt have called back diſagreeable images, and been little elſe, in fact, than ſo many inſinuated affronts.—Louiſa was all ſweetneſs and confuſion——the mother, nothing but ſenſibility and joy——both, at length, however, inſiſted upon his riſing; and he got up with *ſuch* a grace—to be ſure, lady Blandford, there is not a finer young fellow in the kingdom—and, as he is now in ſo fair a way of being good, you muſt allow me to ſpeak of him with my utmoſt partiality. In the evening Mr. Melmoth came with his lady and daughter.—How did my generous Bob—(I will call him *my* Bob *now*) exult in the happineſs of his friend! and how did that equally generous friend rejoice at the happineſs of my brother!—In ſhort, all our hearts overflowed with

delight;

delight; and, to render this delight the more permanent, we fairly married the two couple at St. George's, Hanover-Square, the very next morning.

I have been so busy since the celebration of these weddings, that the writing of this letter has taken me up a whole week; and yet, long as it is now, and, fatigued as I am with drawing it up, I cannot conclude, without informing you of some farther particulars.—Hastings's wound, blessed be God, is not mortal.—A friend from Paris sends word, that it had a dangerous appearance at first; but that, by the skill of a very able surgeon, the patient will be soon in a fair way of recovering.—Criminal as that man may be, still it is a terrible thing to have the blood of a fellow-creature upon our hands.—But the vile Mrs. Darnel—I know not whether it is improper sometimes to be unconcerned

concerned at the misfortunes of the uncommonly wicked—That wretch, finding her infamous hypocrisy thus palpably detected, and, fearing both the reproach of the whole world, and the utmost severity of the law on account of her behaviour to Louisa, sold off her house and furniture, and, with the money it produced, prepared to embark for France—but in going down the river for that purpose, the boat accidentally overset, and the miserable creature, together with the woman who had been the principal instrument in the barbarous behaviour to my sister, was drowned.—As for lady Harold's own maid, Sally, one of my brother's men assures him, she died in an hospital, of a distemper that naturally resulted from her crimes.——Thus you see, in the short story of our family, my dear lady Blandford, that vice is sure to be punished at

last

laſt, however proſperous it may appear in the ſetting out: whereas virtue, let it be never ſo depreſſed in the beginning, is always certain of triumphing in the end.—In the courſe of our little novel, all the worthy characters of diſtinction have been made happy, and Louiſa will take care that none of the inferior ones ſhall go unrewarded. Mrs. Dobſon is to be her houſekeeper, with an annuity of a hundred pounds for life; and the good woman's garden is to be ſettled on her children in the country.—Mrs. Carter's Sally is to attend my ſiſter in quality of woman; and my Bob has taken a large houſe in St. James's Market for the mother; which, when properly ſtocked and fitted up, he intends her as a preſent, and has no doubt but ſhe will be ſoon able to give her daughter ſuch a fortune, as will get her a very excellent huſband.

—God

—God bleſs you, my dear lady Blandford—take care of your health, and ſet me down as

Your ever affectionate,

THEODOSIA HAVERSHAM.

THE END.

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